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The Lowell Story

MAR 19

ANDREW KOPKIND

If his economic plan doesn't work at home . . . (Page 404)

Is Beauty Passé?

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Notes on art and politics. (Page 418)

EDITORIAL

WE ARE THE WORLD (*NOT!*)

The songwriting team of Scowcroft, Cheney, Powell and Wolfowitz had good reason to be smug. Their previous album, *Der Sturm*, with its technopop hits, "Red Rain (Over Baghdad)" and "Proud Hail Mary," had engulfed the charts. Even the weaker singles, like "Bomb Me a Shelter" and "Let's Liberate . . . Kuwait (But Don't Go Any Further)," were snatched up by a public dazzled by their music videos. For a moment it looked as if they had found a way to revive their flagging careers and the declining fortunes of their label, D.O.D. Records.

But the word on the quartet's as yet untitled upcoming release is not good. The working title is *Defense Planning Guidance: 1994-1999*, but critics say the album should be called *Fear of a Peaceful Planet*. Songs like "Back to the U.S.S.R.," "(North Korea) They Might Be Giants" and "I Broke International Law (And I Won)" reminded listeners of stale oldies by such groups as the Police ("I'll Be Watching You") and the British Empire ("Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me").

The fab four want the public to keep spending billions for the United States to stay in the same old groove. They think that songs about new nukers, old terrors and drug dealers will sell. And they insist their domineering style is the only one that will "prevent the emergence of a new rival." But none of the other powers in the business seem interested in competing on those terms. Instead, the demand for a "new world music," blending contributions from all the globe's peoples, seems to be growing.

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LETTERS.

CHILL

London

Since the state of the President's health seems to have become a subject of consuming interest, I feel I should point out that in his January 27 "Beat the Devil," Alexander Cockburn was misinformed. At no time after my recent interview with the President at the White House did I "tell friends" or indeed anyone else that the President "seemed in ghastly shape." Quite the contrary. The President who bade us farewell on December 23 was in buoyant form and full of good humor.

David Frost

COCKBURN REPLIES

Petrolia, Calif.

Maybe the friends got it wrong. On the other hand maybe David Frost has concerns about future access to that buoyant White House good humor. By all means let's give him the benefit of the doubt. On the matter of G.B.'s well-being, I'm told by someone with close experience of the stuff that it takes at least a year to calibrate the correct dosage of the drug Bush is taking against Graves' disease, his thyroid condition. In the interim, says my expert, expect violent mood swings between buoyancy and being completely bummed out.

Alexander Cockburn

BLACK MOUNTAIN'S KLAUS BARBIE?

Ypsilanti, Mich.

I protest Thomas M. Disch's treatment of Charles Olson in his gleeful and abusive "holiday list" [Dec. 30]. Am I naïve to believe that books on such a list would be the reviewers' choices as the year's most important? Disch's attack on Olson, somewhat masked by the "front" of a biography that belittled the poet, is straightforward vilification, and done to insure that the reader would either totally dismiss Olson or at least not bother with the biography. I am appalled that *The Nation* would let such a paragraph through: "every act" EVERY ACT?? "emblematic of . . . atrocities" ATROCITIES? Who did Olson murder? Indeed, was he the Klaus Barbie of Black Mountain? This review (repeated from a long and equally nauseating one in the *Los Angeles Times*) has all the attractiveness of Disch roaring with laughter while Olson is made to dance to Tom Clark's whip. *The Nation* should be ashamed of itself. Print this if you have the nerve.

Clayton Eshleman

DISCH REPLIES

New York City

Clayton Eshleman is understandably upset. When one's idol's biographer documents that not only the idol's feet were of clay but his knees, ass and navel as well, and that his brain had been marinated in booze for decades, what can a disciple do but splutter? To commend a biography, as I do Clark's, one need not venerate its subject. As to Eshleman's particular objections: It *is* the special, baleful fascination of Olson's life that, like a Jonsonian humor, his least actions seem to spring from a central all-informing awfulness, which I described in my offending paragraph as "that special combination of sloth, arrogance and hermetic self-absorption that is the prerogative of poets in our time." As to "atrocities," *Webster's Ninth* defines *atrocity* as "the quality of being atrocious"—that is, "appalling" or "of very poor quality." So one needn't murder to be guilty of atrocities. A sufficiently bad prose style can do the trick.

In closing may I quote my own poem, inspired by letters from other irate Olson disciples who protested my *L.A. Times* review. It appears in the January issue of *Poetry*:

VILLANELLE FOR CHARLES OLSON

I knew him. I loved him. I sat at his feet.
Now there's a bio that says that he was
A liar, a drunkard, a leech, and a cheat,

But I still remember the way, when we'd meet,
I'd break out a joint and we'd both get a buzz.
I knew him; I loved him; I sat at his feet

While he chanted his measures of variable beat,
In the days when my mustache was nothing but fuzz.
A liar, a drunkard, a leech, and a cheat

Can still be a genius whose work can compete
With Homer's and Dante's—as Maximus does!
I know him. I love him. I would sit at his feet

In the kennels of hell like the dog that I was,
But now *I'm* the professor, and that is because
I knew him and loved him and sat at the feet
Of a liar, a drunkard, a leech, and a cheat.

Thomas M. Disch

A.C.L.U. DEFENDS C.O.s

New York City

Bruce Shapiro's "The High Price of Conscience" [Jan. 20; "Letters," March 2] is an important reminder that the Gulf War is far from over for conscientious objectors. Some examples: A group of C.O. Marine reservists ordered to active duty were retained long after their non-C.O. colleagues were returned to civilian status because their C.O. applications were pending. Only the threat of a lawsuit secured their release. Another Marine C.O. reservist was ordered to active duty despite a regulation that reservists who filed C.O. applications should *not* be ordered to active duty until their cases were ruled on. In the Army, C.O. applications are reportedly being denied by higher-ups even when the hearing officer, whose determination by law carries the most weight, has recommended that C.O. status be granted. Much investigation remains to be done of the processing, and summary denial, of Gulf War C.O. applications. The A.C.L.U., with its long history of defending C.O.s, maintains its commitment to the C.O.s of the Gulf War, and of wars yet to come.

Deborah H. Karpatkin
Steven R. Shapiro

VIETNAM WALL

Storrs, Conn.

I'm delighted to see Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country* receive so much space in Lillian S. Robinson's review, "The Vietnam Syndrome" [Jan. 20]. The novel is the best I've read about that war, precisely because, as Robinson writes, the teenage heroine's conception of the war is "entirely created by the media." Robinson errs, however, when she quotes Michael Clark's perceptive comment that the Vietnam Memorial " 'wall replaces the Bible; the war replaces the family; and SAM ALAN HUGHES [the name of the girl's dead adolescent father] replaces history.' "

But Samantha's father's name is Dwayne; and although when she and her grandmother (and uncle) go to the wall the name her grandmother reaches for is his, the name Sam is most moved by is one that resembles her own. "SAM A. HUGHES. It is the first on a line. It is down low enough to touch. She touches her own name. How odd it feels, as though all the names in America have been used to decorate this wall." Mason's point, I believe, is not that "the wall replaces the Bible" but that all of us died a little in Vietnam.

Joan Joffe Hall

ROBINSON REPLIES

Austin, Tex.

It's ironic that in a review focusing on the ways our remembering, misremembering and dismembering of Vietnam influence life and policy today, my own lapse of memory distorted the intentions of both Bobbie Ann Mason and Michael Clark. I am responsible for the misinformation in brackets in the quote from Clark's fine essay "Remembering Vietnam," and I'm very grateful to Joan Joffe Hall for calling me on it.

However, in context Clark's statement about the Bible is not misplaced. As he points out, "the next-to-last letter Sam reads finally does reveal the origin of her name, which her father says may be in Chronicles, but when she looks it up in the Bible she finds that 'there was no Samantha in either the first or the second book of Chronicles.' Thus . . . her discovery at the memorial offers the connection to the past and sense of identity that these more traditional forms of historical continuity cannot. The wall replaces the Bible; the war replaces the family; and 'SAM ALAN HUGHES' replaces history."

I would add that the wall replaces the Bible not only as a sacred text but as the particular book where one's own identity may be recorded, the *family* Bible. In this sense Hall, Clark and I are all "right" in our interpretations of what Mason is saying about the persistence and betrayal of our memory of Vietnam.

Lillian S. Robinson

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EDITORIALS.

Clinton Express?

The ritual anointment of Bill Clinton as the Democratic presidential candidate, so rudely interrupted by charges of infidelity and draft evasion, has resumed with lavish pomp. Scarcely had the Florida exit polls been processed on Super Tuesday than the popes of politics and punditry laid on their hands. You knew it *had* to be a defining moment when Dan Rather opened his barrel of Southern metaphors and produced such crackers as, "Bill Clinton roared through the South like a big wheel through the cotton fields." Republican strategist Kevin Phillips was so sure of Clinton's nomination that he had his running mate picked out: Paul Tsongas. It seems hardly worthwhile to hold any more primaries. Why not save a whole lot of money and cut to the convention in New York?

Clinton's recent troubles with rumormongers, investigative journalists and occasional lovers suggest a hasty coronation would be unwise. *New York Times* reporter Jeff Gerth's telling (when comprehensible) story on Bill and Hillary's real estate partnership with an Arkansas S&L operator highlights the sleazy side of the candidate already apparent in earlier exposés.

Of course, that's baloney and this is politics, and it is on

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the political front that Clinton is earning his medals of honor. What confers the most respect is the exit polls showing his strong support from Southern blacks *and* "white voters of moderate means" (sorry, this year we can't talk about any class except the middle one). The analysts insist that no Democratic candidate can win the South in a general election without what Eddie Williams of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies calls "the Bubba and brother vote." Furthermore, the conventional strategic wisdom is that no Democrat can win without carrying the South. Add to that the factoid that no Northern white Democratic candidate since Franklin Roosevelt has received a majority of Southern white votes—and you get Bill Clinton.

That's the current spin, but there's ample evidence for a counterspin. A Democratic candidate not only has to get a good percentage of Southern blacks who vote—which Clinton did—he must also motivate an extremely large black turnout, which Clinton did not. In fact, while his percentage of the black vote, overall, was roughly comparable to Jesse Jackson's on Super Tuesday four years ago, the black vote in absolute numbers was down almost 25 percent. The total vote was also much reduced.

That's not a good omen for Clinton if he's the one in November. In the face of a creditable Republican campaign, which we have to assume Bush will ultimately put together, a Democrat must expand the electorate to overcome what looks like a natural Republican majority in the South grounded in white supremacy, Christian fundamentalism and patriotic chauvinism. A Democrat with any principles cannot embrace that ideology, but he can appeal to poorer whites on the basis of economic oppression and blacks on the basis of racial oppression to swell the voting rolls.

On his record, Clinton gives few good reasons for those groups to rush to the polls in the necessary numbers. He has been, as Jerry Brown aptly said, "a right-to-work governor in a right-to-work state," and he has never supported organized labor or its broad agenda in a region where unionization is the most important means of economic betterment for poor whites as well as blacks. He runs against welfare (and by extension, welfare recipients) and he proposes boot camps as a way to deal with social disintegration. And while he has appointed many blacks to government positions, his strategy emphasizes individual achievement to the detriment of popular empowerment.

The morning after Super Tuesday, a lot of liberal whites were swooning over Clinton's biracial success. His campaign, the *Times* averred, "has enabled Americans once more to say, without irony or bitterness, black and white together." It's a sentiment heard a lot since the Jackson campaign, which made many whites nervous by asserting black leadership, by projecting power and by threatening the closed Democratic hierarchy. The racial division of America is profoundly rooted in history. It may be, as Andrew Hacker suggests in *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, that political struggle at the level possible in our time cannot bring the races together. It can't be that Bill Clinton's platitudes can do the work alone.

Irish Gag Rule

The Irish Supreme Court has diplomatically allowed a 14-year-old rape victim to travel to England for an abortion, thereby averting international embarrassment and an internal political crisis. But under a separate ruling by the Court, it may be unlawful to talk about the decision's result. In a 1988 decision, Ireland's highest court barred family-planning clinics from telling pregnant women that lawful abortions are available in England. In other words, the Court prohibited the clinics from telling women what the 14-year-old's case has now effectively told the world.

The 1988 order, issued against Open Door Counselling and Dublin Well Woman Centre, two Dublin-based clinics, is under review by the European Court of Human Rights, which has set argument for March 24 to decide whether the order violates speech, privacy and equal protection guarantees under the European Convention on Human Rights.

At the root of the Open Door Counselling case is the same constitutional provision that the Irish Attorney General relied on in enjoining the rape victim's travel to England. That provision, adopted in 1983, "acknowledges the right to life of the unborn." When the provision was adopted, abortion was already illegal in Ireland, punishable by life imprisonment. There are no exceptions for pregnancies caused by rape or incest, or that threaten the mother's health. The only exception, judicially created at that, is to save the life of the mother.

Just across the water in England and Wales, however, abortions have long been legal, and every year 4,000 to 5,000 Irish women make that trip. Citing the constitutional amendment, antiabortion forces brought suit to enjoin clinics in Ireland from informing women about this lawful option.

The clinics, which are committed to providing neutral counseling on all lawful reproductive choices, argued that the injunction would violate their rights to free expression and association as well as their clients' rights to privacy and full information. The Supreme Court ruled that the right to life of the unborn trumps all those rights. In a subsequent case against several Irish students who sought to publish the addresses and phone numbers of English abortion clinics, the Court made clear that the injunction barred *all* discussion of the availability of abortion in England.

The Irish restriction is far more extreme than the one upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court last year, for the U.S. regulation applied only to federally funded clinics. The Irish rule bars all clinics and all people, whether or not they receive government support, from informing women about the possibility of obtaining a lawful abortion abroad. It is a classic prior restraint on speech.

The Irish Supreme Court initially announced the result in the 14-year-old's case in a one-sentence ruling that said nothing about the merits of the case, with the promise of a written decision to come later. The Court's delay may have been attributable to the following quandary: How could the Court explain its rationale without violating its own ban on telling women that they may travel to England for lawful abortions? When the Court issued its full decision a week later, it tried

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to finesse the issue. It found that because the 14-year-old had threatened to commit suicide, she was justified under Irish law in obtaining an abortion, in Ireland, to save her life.

The Court's finding leaves open the broader question the case posed: Can one country forcibly restrain its citizens from traveling to another country to obtain a lawful abortion there? European Community law, which guarantees the right to travel within Europe for medical services, would appear to answer that question. But how does one even begin to debate the issue without violating the prohibition on stating that lawful abortions are available in England? The recent controversy underscores the folly of making it illegal to talk about something that is legal to do.

DAVID COLE

David Cole, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center and an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights, will represent Open Door Counselling at the European Court of Human Rights.

War No More

For President Bush, last month's drug summit in San Antonio was a flop. Latin American leaders surprised him by jointly deciding to pull their militaries out of the drug war. The harshest comments came from Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, who called U.S. policies in his country "a failure" and Washington's goals "unrealistic," complaining that the level of U.S. assistance was "completely insufficient" to make even a dent in the booming coca trade. At Peru's insistence, all the countries agreed to reject a Washington initiative to reduce the flow of drugs by 50 percent by the year 2000.

The February 26-27 summit had been designed by White House officials as a follow-up to a meeting in Cartagena, Colombia, two years ago, in which Bush pushed the presidents of Peru, Colombia and Bolivia to involve their militaries in the war on drugs. In response to the spread of the cocaine trade in recent years, this session was opened up to include leaders from Venezuela, Ecuador and Mexico.

For the first time, Andean countries rebuffed Washington's strategies and goals. Colombia announced that its army will no longer play a major role in pursuing traffickers. Bolivia said it was also moving to withdraw its army from the drug war and requested that U.S. military assistance be converted into economic aid. Peru rejected a repressive policy that did not include substantial funds for crop substitution programs.

Antidrug operations in Peru's "Cocaland," the source of 60 percent of the world's coca, highlight the uselessness of U.S. policies and their devastating impact on a fragile democracy. There the drug war has exacerbated the civil war, encouraged human rights violations and aggravated deep social and economic problems without accomplishing much. Coca crops declined slightly, from 121,300 hectares in 1990 to 120,800 in 1991—but that was largely due to a coca-killing bug. So far, the only beneficiaries of the drug war in Peru are the Shining Path guerrillas and an increasingly corrupt and brutal military.

Last summer, after intense U.S. pressure, Fujimori reluctantly agreed to receive more than fifty military advisers, including Green Berets and Navy personnel, and $34.9 million in military aid for 1991, $10 million of which was cut by Congress because of Peru's human rights record. The money—less than 0.2 percent of the U.S. antidrug budget—is to be used for repairs and fuel for Peruvian aircraft that intercept drug planes, for river interdiction by Peru's navy and for ground operations to seize processing labs and coca seedbeds.

But for the troubled Andean republic another antidrug strategy that does not provide economic alternatives for the 250,000 coca growers would be even more disastrous. Enraged *cocaleros* would turn increasingly to the Shining Path insurgents for protection, and the Upper Huallaga Valley would quickly become the guerrillas' strongest bastion.

In Peru, as well as in Colombia, insurgency is the main threat to national security. In both countries, most of the antidrug money has been spent in counterinsurgency operations, in which hundreds of civilians have been executed by government forces without trial. "No government can fight against an entire population," said Fujimori at the summit. He argued for crop substitution programs to provide alternatives for Peruvians who depend on the drug trade. Cocaine is worth $1.2 billion to $1.5 billion a year to the Peruvian economy, yet only $1.9 million in aid was destined last year for crop substitution.

Fujimori and most Peruvians know that attempting a military solution to a gigantic economic and social problem is bound to fail. At the height of the drug war euphoria, during the 1990 Cartagena summit, Fujimori's predecessor, Alan García, asked Bush a provocative but central question: "Mr. President, all this is very nice, but where is the beef?"

With the recession deepening and the drug war fading from the top of the agenda, there will be no beef, but luckily for Latin America, not much of a drug war either.

SONIA GOLDENBERG

Sonia Goldenberg, a Peruvian journalist, lives in New York.

★

THE EIGHTIES RE-EXAMINED

"It all will trickle down," the boomsters said.
The eighties were when no one but a kook
Would mention that the poor got poorer while
The rich lived more and more like King Farouk.

Statistics now show where the boom dough went.
The middle classes hardly gained a nickel.
Two-thirds went to the richest one percent.
A breakthrough: We produced an upward trickle.

Calvin Trillin

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Do you by any chance remember the official ex post facto justification for the bombing of Libya on April 15, 1986? If you do recall it, then you will have a memory of Administration spokesmen bragging that "we" put Colonel Qaddafi out of the terrorism business. That's right, yes sir, one quick blitz of downtown Tripoli at prime time, the taking out of Qaddafi's adopted daughter and no more trouble from that master of terror.

On the whole, the Bush Administration must hope that this claim has been forgotten. Otherwise, why would it have reversed course and blamed Libya for detonating Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, at Christmas 1988, one of the worst atrocities committed against civilians in recent times? One moment U.S. power has put Libya out of the running, the next moment Syria and Iran are found responsible for the Pan Am bombing, and the moment after that we are expected to believe that it was Libya, unabashed, all along.

Welcome to the world of official "antiterrorist" rhetoric, where at any moment you may be asked to believe not that Oceania is now at war with Eastasia but that Oceania *always has been* at war with Eastasia. (Those Eurasians are looking better and better.) My own interest in this derives from three loyalties, which I strive to preserve from the memory hole. The first is to my friend Bernt Carlsson, the great Swedish socialist and U.N. Commissioner for Namibia, who was among those murdered by the Lockerbie bomb. The second is to my friend Salman Rushdie, targeted for murder by the Iranians and regarded with ill-concealed dislike by both the British and American governments (which once tried to teach us that the Ayatollah was a hate figure rather than a covert weapons customer). The third is to Susan and Daniel Cohen, writers of children's books in Port Jervis, New York, whose daughter was also on the Lockerbie plane and who have been trying to get a word of sense and decency out of the government ever since, and to no avail.

To the small extent that facts matter in the case, they have been unchallenged for a considerable time. In March 1989 it was the unanimous conclusion of British, German and U.S. police and security officials, on and off the record, that Pan Am 103 had been hideously downed by a weird Palestinian splinter group styling itself the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command (P.F.L.P.-G.C.). With Iranian money and Syrian collusion, the group was out to avenge the appalling destruction of the Iranian civilian airbus by the U.S.S. Vincennes, which occurred in July of 1988. The P.F.L.P.-G.C. had also offered to take up the "contract" on Salman Rushdie, which further suggested that it was available for commissions of this kind (known as "deniable" when they are executed in the civilized world).

So matters stood until the fall of last year. The usual journalists were given the usual leaks and pointed toward the usual targets. How mortified they were when George Bush suddenly announced that Syria had been given "a bum rap." It had been the mad dog of Libya all the time! The whole pyramid of "forensic evidence," so carefully erected by the cream of "terrorism experts," suddenly looked like so much Jell-O. "A Libyan operation from top to bottom," said a State Department flack, for all the world as if this were obvious to any fool.

Cynics—of whom there are still a few left, I'm glad to say—were on hand to point out the obvious political manipulation here. Syria had been a partner in the glory of Desert Storm and was being urgently solicited by James Baker for his photo-op "peace process." On past form, a finding of Syrian guilt would necessarily demand a routine bombing of downtown Damascus in time for *Nightline*. And how was that going to look, what with impartial mediation and all?

Accordingly, a new story was put out and cravenly accepted. Two Libyan nationals have been placed in the lineup and duly identified. To the surprise of many, Libya has reacted by taking the British and U.S. governments to the International Court of Justice. A Memorandum of Law has been prepared by Francis Boyle, a professor of international law at the University of Illinois who is advising the Libyan counsel in the case. I summarize his argument as follows:

> Libya is a party to the 1971 Montreal Sabotage Convention and has complied with its provisions by putting the two suspects on trial and inviting outsiders to view the proceedings. Until the trial is completed, there need be no extradition except to a country that has an extradition treaty with Libya. The United States has no such treaty.

But let me also quote Professor Boyle directly. Noting the renewed threats of force against Libya and the refusal of the United States and Britain to accept international mediation, he states outright, "Both states know full well that Libya was not responsible for the Lockerbie bombing."

I do not myself know that to be certainly true. But I do know that the Administration in Washington has constantly refused to make public its evidence; that it asks us to believe there were two identical and parallel plots against Pan Am 103; that it took no action against Pan Am for its clear, cost-cutting negligence with respect to the Lockerbie flight baggage; that it continues to let the Federal Aviation Administration bluff and cover up; and that it has promoted the incompetent steward of the earlier "inquiry," Samuel Skinner, from the Transportation Department to the post of White House Chief of Staff.

The effect of this on a family like the Cohens, who want to know the truth, is devastating. "We don't even talk to the State Department anymore," they told me. "It has been one cover-up after another. And if you look at the timing, it has all been to do with close relations between the U.S. and Syria, or the U.S. and Iran." I don't mean to cheapen the experience of the Cohens, who have larger griefs than coping with an untrustworthy government, but an Administration that would stall them and lie to them and switch stories on them is probably capable of doing the same to the electorate—"maybe in time," as Daniel Cohen put it, "for some election antiterrorist grandstand." I have the Cohens' permission to say that they don't want anyone else bombed in this affair but that they would like the Bush Administration to stop playing low politics.

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The Music Man

EDWARD SOREL

BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH
JUST BECAUSE I'M IMPATIENT WITH FRIENDS WHO DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAY "GOODBYE"...
...AND I'M NO GOOD AT HIDING MY BOREDOM WHEN FRIENDS GO ON AND ON ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS...
ED!!
...AND BECAUSE I HATE PHYSICAL DEMONSTRATIONS OF AFFECTION— ESPECIALLY FROM MEN...
...PEOPLE SEE ME AS A COLD FISH...SELF-ABSORBED AND UNFEELING.
YET AT THE MOVIES I CRY AT ANYTHING SENTIMENTAL OR INSPIRATIONAL...
...AND AT MUSICALS I ALWAYS CRY AT THE FINALE WHEN THE LOVERS ARE REUNITED...
...I EVEN CRY AT THE COMMERCIAL WHERE THE MUSIC SWELLS AND THEN THE SON TELEPHONES HIS MOTHER.
IF ONLY REAL LIFE HAD MOOD MUSIC IN THE BACKGROUND TO TELL ME WHAT TO FEEL...
...THEN YOU'D SEE WHAT A WARM, CARING PERSON I REALLY AM.

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ARTICLES.

TSONGAS'S CITY-STATE

No Miracle In Lowell

ANDREW KOPKIND

Lowell, Massachusetts

The big deal in Lowell this winter was an all-day "motivational program" given by a TV self-esteem pitchman named Tony Robbins to a crowd of some 2,700 people, each of whom paid $179 to scavenge vicariously in what Robbins calls "a warehouse full of cutting-edge technology . . . to create success." Early on the appointed morning in February, a parade of smartly dressed men and women, briefcases in hand, headed for Lowell Memorial Auditorium, a handsome neoclassical building rising above one of the ancient canals that powered the many textile mills that rose here 150 years ago, and that gave the city the noble sobriquet "Venice of America." These were the canals, by the way, that a young city councilor named Paul Tsongas once proposed be paved over to facilitate vehicular traffic.

The youthful managers and eager professionals in Robbins's audience need all the technology he can deliver. The growth, prosperity and success promised them just a few years ago, by Paul Tsongas in particular, are in short supply. His ballyhooed experiment in urban revitalization for Lowell has not only run out of steam, it seems now to be running in reverse. Lowell's troubles, while in some cases less acute than those of its sibling Merrimack Valley communities not blessed with pork-barrel funds, are nonetheless grave. Jordan Marsh, the only big department store in town, is closed for good. The Hilton hotel that Tsongas coaxed into town (with a federal grant) as a development anchor has become a Sheraton and may well be a Motel 6 by the time the tourists return this summer. Wang Laboratories (another federal beneficiary), headquartered here, has taken a serious bath, and its red-brick high-rise training center is now a community college library. An immigrant influx of some 25,000 Cambodians and other Asians has produced soaring unemployment and predictable symptoms of urban decay. It had somehow slipped Tsongas's mind to include the poor, the working class, the unemployed, the unions or the discount shoppers in his experiment, and now in the general slump they are paying doubly for their exclusion. No wonder that Tony Robbins, not Paul Tsongas, is the major motivational source in the city today.

Before he came down with cancer in 1983, Tsongas was planning to run for President on his record in Lowell, the success story par excellence of urban renaissance in America, at least for a few years in the 1980s. It seems crazy now, but his economic philosophy was informed by the optimism of expansion, not the gloom of decline. He had every reason to take credit for the city's flashy prosperity, its national reputation, its creative attractions. By acclamation he was acknowledged as the patron of the city; "Saint Paul" was born again on the way to Lowell. Pre-eminently, if not quite single-handedly, Tsongas put together the pieces of the new Lowell and in many cases micromanaged the result. Of course with characteristic (and slightly suspect) modesty, Tsongas did not take all the credit he deserved; he told Harvard urban development researchers, "Eliminate a dozen people and none of it would have happened." But the researchers knew better; they wrote later in their case study that "Tsongas is too modest. . . . Eliminate one individual, Tsongas, and Lowell's revitalization would not have been nearly as dramatic."

Cosimo the Competent, Lorenzo the Managerial.

The plan (that word is central to this story) Tsongas imagined and to a large extent executed does not make sense without an understanding of Lowell's place in American history. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century it became, quite simply, the most concentrated industrial center in the nation, the showplace of the Industrial Revolution and the birthplace of industrial capitalism in the New World. In 1810 a Boston Brahmin named Francis Cabot Lowell traveled to England and saw for the first time the incredible benefits of water-powered looms to elevate the profit positions of textile-mill owners in the Midlands. In a feat of legendary industrial espionage and unauthorized technology transfer, Lowell memorized the mechanics of the operations and sailed home with the blueprints in his head.

Back in Boston, he put the workings down on paper, organized a posse of friendly entrepreneurs and scouted locations for mills on the Midlands model. Ur-Lowell was a place called Chelmsford Neck, at a bend in the Merrimack River about thirty miles north of Boston. The Pennacook Indians, who had once been given deed to the area, were on the losing side in King Philip's War and were forced out by the European settlers. The Neck had the right specifications: a perfect drop in the river (to turn the machines), abundant cheap labor (teenage daughters of hard-pressed farmers) and proximity to good ports and stores of raw materials (slave-picked cotton came into nearby Massachusetts Bay landings). In other words, fair nature, hard times and inhuman exploitation all conspired to turn Lowell into a gold mine for the infant capitalists. (Readers will be spared further commentary on the ironies of that dialectic for our candidate's time.)

In any case, before long those pesky contradictions that bedevil smooth-running economic operations, like hidden viruses in computers, sent the whole system crashing. The farmers' daughters were unhappy with their long hours, unhealthy work environment and brutal living conditions, and went on strike for a better lot. Most quit anyway after a few years at the loom. Their places were taken by a succession of European ethnic immigrants—Irish, French Canadian, Italian, German,

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Greek—who overwhelmed the Yankees and transformed the culture and politics of the city. The new technology of the 1820s became obsolete by the 1860s, and newer mills on other rivers, or powered by steam, took the competitive edge.

The immigrant workers, inspired by European socialism and American labor activism, organized themselves against the millowners and struck as the Yankee mill girls had done. What with the terrible depressions that hit in the 1890s and again in the early 1900s, Lowell's competitive edge dulled to disappearance. In the years just after World War I the factories began fleeing south in the vanguard of what would become the wholesale evacuation of manufacturing from Massachusetts, which continues to this day despite the state's brief economic "miracle" of recent memory. (Or was it a dream?)

World War II brought a bloom to Lowell's sallow cheeks, but it turned out to be no more than the evanescent blush of a dying consumptive, and the city coughed its last when the war factories were demobbed. Or so it seemed. The economic decline drove thousands to booming regions, and those who remained wallowed in self-disregard. Tsongas told the Harvard researchers, "It was difficult to be proud of your hometown if you came from Lowell."

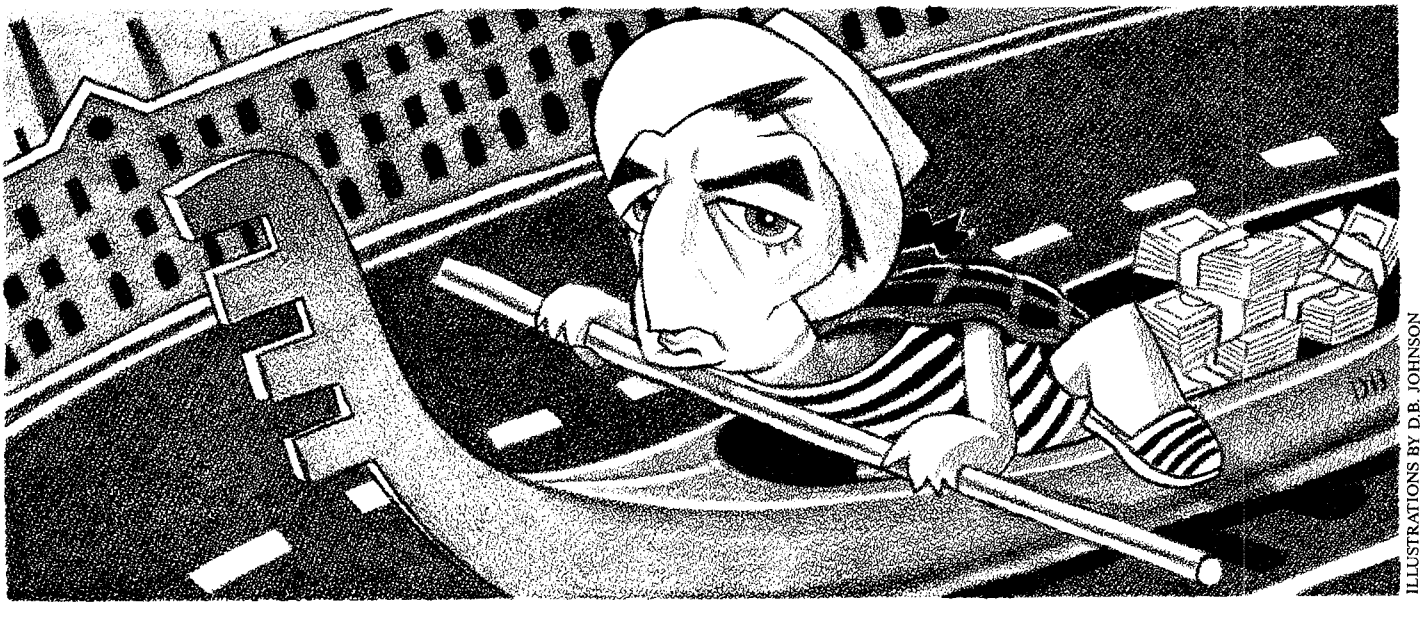
Tsongas grew up in Lowell at its nadir in the 1950s and early 1960s, mired in the swamp of deindustrialization and depression. He worked in his father's dry-cleaning business (he suspects that fumes from the chemicals used may have caused his lymphoma) and, like most ambitious young men of his generation, got out of town as soon as possible: Dartmouth for college, Yale for law school, Ethiopia in the Peace Corps. But like his rival Bill Clinton, he went home again to fashion a political career from the building blocks of his heritage.

It took some time for the light bulb to go on. His idea of 1972 to pave over the wonderful canals, built primarily by Irish contract labor, was unheeded. Well, here's Plan B: a privately organized development project primed with a huge flow of public money directed to transform the working-class and welfare-dependent city into a middle-class tourist attraction, an upscale shopping zone and a high-tech haven. Bingo.

The cornerstone of the edifice, however, was not industrial development but historic preservation. Tsongas—by the late 1970s a member of Congress—got on the appropriate subcommittee, wrote the pertinent legislation and shepherded a bill through to passage that established the country's first urban national park in his old hometown. Not just a national *monument* like the Indian mounds in Iowa, or a historic *site* like the Herbert Hoover birthplace: Lowell now has a proper park, with Smokey the Bear rangers, a museum, canal walks, mill tours, a display devoted to local antihero Jack Kerouac, ethnic fast food, fake trolley cars, *real* trolley cars—the genuine article, like Yellowstone or Yosemite. Without the bears.

At the same time, a web of interlocking agencies was spun to supervise economic development. As a U.S. Senator, Tsongas produced the Lowell Plan, a dreamy 1979 scenario for community renewal based on improbable cooperation between all sectors of society. In the local legend, the muse of development came to Tsongas in a Greek restaurant and caused him to draw up the Plan on a paper placemat. (That would put it in a category with supply-side economics, first published by Arthur Laffer on a cocktail napkin over lunch.) Parts of the city not quite up to national-park importance were set aside as a heritage state park and other lesser categories. Tsongas also set up the Lowell Development and Financial Corporation as a nonprofit to funnel private and public funds in the form of low-interest loans to businesses and developers in the city. That's right, breaks for business.

Lowell itself became a kind of economic theme park, parallel to the national historical one. Money was cadged from Washington to restore the drab old buildings, repoint the crumbling brick and install ersatz gaslights along the narrow streets. A great swath of territory was cleared for the federally aided hotel, né Hilton. Shops that sold staple goods at a discount to the poor, the elderly and the unsophisticated were rather rudely forced out of business to make way for boutiques. There's a folk music festival in the summer. In all, a deliberate attempt was made to turn plain old Lowell into one of those new yuppie quarters that draw shoppers and immigrants to Boston, Minneapolis, Seattle and places in between.



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Tsongas's role in all of this was almost Medicean: a humane philosopher/aristocrat creating, managing and protecting a flourishing city-state by the force of his own vision and the political tools at his command. Cosimo the Competent, Lorenzo the Managerial. His loyal princelings ran the various agencies, held office as City Manager and sat on the City Council and the school board. There was occasional friction and Tsongas didn't get his way every time. For instance, he fought with a school superintendent over a piece of prime property. The superintendent wanted it for a "magnet" high school; Tsongas, who makes a big deal out of his promotion of education, wanted it for upper-middle-class private development. Tsongas lost.

What's wrong with Lowell is what's wrong with Tsongas's industrial policy.

But he had many more wins than losses. He convinced An Wang to locate the world headquarters of his computer company in a new industrial park in Lowell. Of course, Wang already had a facility on the outskirts of town, so it wasn't that much of a stretch. But Tsongas used both his economic leverage with the development agencies and his princely powers of persuasion to draw Wang into the Plan. In fact, he got the government to give $5 million to the development corporation, which in turn lent it to Wang. The tycoon built a training center and other handsome structures, and Lowell was suddenly a major pushpin on the high-tech map of America.

Tsongas utilized the development corporation as the vehicle for pressuring local banks to contribute one-twentieth of 1 percent of their deposits to a loan pool for redevelopment. Some bankers figured there would never be any more development, so why protest? New England's most prominent rent-a-quote economist, the Bank of Boston's James Howell, gave the verdict on Lowell in 1975: "[It] has no future . . . no economic hope." But when other bankers balked, Tsongas ratcheted up the campaign, reminding them that he sat on the House Banking Committee and they had best do his bidding. He had been extremely helpful to the industry by leading the fight to deregulate savings and loan associations in the early 1980s, a legislative triumph he curiously omits from his speeches.

Now a city-state needs a city university, and Tsongas helped convert two minor-league colleges—Lowell State and Lowell Tech (the latter a relic of the textile industry days)—into Lowell University, a part of the University of Massachusetts system; last year it was further upgraded into UMass-Lowell. Its mission is frankly to aid the development of the region, and its engineering and management schools are closely allied with high-tech businesses in Lowell itself and in the vast techno-zone around Route 128, the East Coast's Silicon Valley, not very far to the south.

Naturally, Tsongas was given a seat on the Board of Trustees of Lowell U, and later he headed the Regents for the whole UMass system. His reign there, as it was in the cultural affairs of the city, was largely benevolent. As one academic put it, "He allowed good things to happen." For instance, he did not object when the university's president set up a work environment department in the engineering school and staffed it with some of the most progressive—and renowned—occupational health and safety professionals in the country. The highly interventionist program could be considered hostile to some of Tsongas's corporate comrades in the region (although so far it is not), but he has put no crude strictures on the school to rein in its ideologically deviant members. Years ago, when socialist Michael Harrington came to speak at Lowell University, Tsongas approved because, as he said at the time, "these guys keep us honest." Nor has he questioned the national park's stunning presentation of the class struggle in Lowell. A slide show run every half-hour (there were 800,000 visitors last year) describes the old Lowell as "a city based on the exploitation of a permanent working class," a line seen nowhere in the Plan.

But Tsongas still keeps his hand in the minutiae of academic and cultural life. He strewed art in public places (none of it up to Florentine quattrocento standards), and in the middle of his campaign for the presidency he is trying to get the University to move its bookstore into downtown Lowell, which now has none. Tsongas was reportedly dismayed to see that Nashua, another old mill town and a rival to Lowell just across the New Hampshire border, has a Barnes & Noble right on its Main Street. The students strongly object. Tsongas, however, would override their demands for his dreams.

If Lowell's success in the 1980s was a model for America, its sudden failure must have heavy resonances for the country as well. It's why you don't hear much about Lowell from Tsongas in his current campaign, and why the great experiment in urban revitalization is not touted as his plan for the country. But to a large degree what happened to Lowell *is* what happened to America, and Tsongas's own failures in that regard should be instructive as he tries to sell himself as an economic savior. All the points mushed up in his famous booklet, *A Call to Economic Arms*, are illustrated in the living city.

To begin with, the Lowell Plan and its various projects completely ignored the working-class neighborhoods, the poor, the immigrants and the aging ethnic populations that make up the bulk of the city—just as Tsongas never mentions those sectors in his economic manifesto. The implicit idea is that prosperity trickles down from upper-class development into the worlds of the deprived.

It simply didn't happen. Worse than that, Tsongas's henchpeople in city government tried to bulldoze—literally—the lower orders out of the picture. City Manager Joe Tully, for years Tsongas's key man on the ground, planned in 1982 to raze a large part of an old working-class district called The Acre, which lies on the edge of the national park and the boutique belt. Many of the 15,000 inhabitants were Latinos of various national provenances. The Lowell *Sun*, not always a Tsongas fan but a Lowell Plan booster of unbounded proportions, ran vicious editorials against the inhabitants; one editorial cartoon depicted them as hideous rats jumping the good

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ship Acre: "LET THE CRIMINALS LEAVE . . . and we'll have a better ship." Only the successful struggle of a local grass-roots organization, Coalition for a Better Acre, saved the area. And as for Tully—he was on the grift and went to jail, though Paul Tsongas came to his trial as a character witness.

The business and political elites Tsongas commanded were in effect an army in a war for territory—some of it geographical, some cultural, some ideological—with other classes, races and interests. The same fight has been waged in most major cities, most fiercely when urban land is contested by redevelopers on the one hand and poor residents on the other. In Lowell, however, it was total war, for the contested territory included the whole city and its society.

In a sense, the battles began 300 years ago when the British replaced the Pennacook Indians. More recently, middle-class "Americans" in advanced assimilation have taken territory from poorer ethnics. "Little Canada," where the mill-working Québécois had lived, was largely flattened and the cultural community devastated. The Acre survived because the Coalition was able to outsmart the central planners, but the life of the neighborhood has been severely circumscribed by the elimination of cheap stores, restaurants, services and attractions. Its citizens, as well as Latinos and Asians in other quarters, lost ground in schooling, social mobility and political influence.

In a revealing passage in his memoir of cancer and its aftermath, *Heading Home*, Tsongas recounts how he broke the news to his twin sister, Thaleia, that there is no Santa Claus. He has been telling the country the same thing this year on the campaign trail. But it was in Lowell that he acted out the "truth" that he insists we learn: That government is best which aids the upper middle class and lets the poor fend for themselves.

Grinch capitalism has its own contradictions, however, and they became as apparent in Lowell as the contradictions of early industrialism did a century ago. Without a steady dose of public tax money (for parks, for housing and urban development, for welfare) the private sector can't cope. At the same time, an industrial policy can't be sustained in one city without regard to regional and national conditions. Even in the good times, most Lowell residents riding the boom worked outside the city in the defense-based and electronics companies along Route 128. Many professionals "blow in" daily from their homes in the more desirable suburbs closer to Boston. Those at the bottom of the scale took the leavings. The Cambodians, for instance, were low-tech workers in high-tech industries: Many of them assembled circuit boards in "electronic sweatshops" under contract to Wang, Raytheon, A.T.&T. and other big-name companies. The Cambodians were nonunionized, poorly paid, denied benefits, kept in poor conditions—and laid off when the companies began downsizing. Now there are no jobs for them, nor will there be in the future unless there's another military buildup or the companies successfully convert to civilian production at the level and in the same location they were when their decline began. That would probably require public investment in corporate equity, an idea utterly anathema to Tsonganomics. After all, there are industrial

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policies and there are industrial policies. Meanwhile, the plight of the displaced workers—an enormous chunk of the local population—replicates that of the Yankee mill girls and their immigrant successors.

When the regional industries declined, the city's economy suffered more severely than it might have if a better class mix had been maintained. The boutiques brought in to replace the discount stores went under, and the center-city streets are now lined with shuttered shops. The infrastructure built to support upscale Lowell is falling apart, and it is doubtful the downscale tourists who visit the national park in summer will shore it up again. For some reason, the planners were too shortsighted to see what would happen when the economic and demographic conditions of the early 1980s changed.

Tsongas goes around the country promising high-wage jobs in new manufacturing industries by means of a program of public aid to business for research and development, tax cuts for capital gains and investments, job-training programs and educational reforms, an aggressive policy of opening foreign markets and an easing of antitrust laws. Many of those ideas have been tried in the laboratory of Lowell in local forms, shapes and sizes. The university, publicly funded, contributes a kind of R&D to industries, and other schools and colleges train and track workers into local businesses. The city has given out tax breaks until it's blue in the face. Boosters have touted Lowell's wares beyond the Merrimack, and have especially hard-sold its attractions to tourists, a lucrative kind of "foreign trade."

What's wrong with Lowell is what's wrong with Tsongas's industrial policy: It won't work unless everyone affected by it participates in making the decisions, setting the agenda and allocating the resources. Who decides? is at least as important a question as Who benefits? Certainly the consequences of "planning," in the Tsongoid sense, differ widely as to how those questions are answered. The Harvard researchers who studied Lowell in the mid-1980s saw even then the flaws in the picture: "The revitalization story of Lowell illustrates that the trickle-down aspects of development cannot be assumed; it often requires an engaged citizenry to ensure that the benefits from development are more evenly distributed." In other words, the time when "aggressively pro-business" policies were successful has long passed, and Paul Tsongas might think again about paving over the canals. □

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HISPANIC U.S.A.

The Mirror of The Other

CARLOS FUENTES

The U.S.-Mexico border, some of those who cross it say, is not really a border but a scar. Will it heal? Will it bleed once more? When a Hispanic worker crosses this border, he sometimes asks, "Hasn't this always been our land? Am I not coming back to it? Is it not in some way ours?" He can taste it, hear its language, sing its songs and pray to its saints. Will this not always be in its bones a Hispanic land?

But first we must remember that ours was once an empty continent. All of us came here from somewhere else, beginning with the nomadic tribes from Asia who became the first Americans. The Spaniards came later, looking for the Seven Cities of Gold, but when they found none in what is today the southwestern United States, they left their language and their religion, and sometimes their blood. The Spanish empire extended as far north as Oregon and filled the coastal region with the sonorous names of its cities: Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, San Bernardino, Monterey, Santa Cruz. When it achieved independence, the Mexican republic inherited these vast, underpopulated territories, but it lost them in 1848 to the expanding North American republic and its ideology of Manifest Destiny: the U.S.A., from sea to shining sea.

So the Hispanic world did not come to the United States, the United States came to the Hispanic world. It is perhaps an act of poetic justice that now the Hispanic world should return, both to the United States and to part of its ancestral heritage in the Western Hemisphere. The immigrants keep coming, not only to the Southwest but up the Eastern Seaboard to New York and Boston and west to Chicago and the Midwest, where they meet the long-established Chicanos, the North Americans of Mexican origin, who have been here even longer than the gringos. They all join to make up the 25 million Hispanics in the United States—the vast majority of Mexican origin, but many from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Central and South America. It is the fastest-growing minority in the United States.

Los Angeles is now the second-largest Spanish-speaking city in the world, after Mexico City, before Madrid and Barcelona. You can prosper in southern Florida even if you speak only Spanish, as the population is predominantly Cuban. San Antonio, integrated by Mexicans, has been a bilingual city for 150 years. By the middle of the coming century, almost half the population of the United States will be Spanish-speaking.

This third Hispanic development, that of the United States, is not only an economic and political event; it is above all a

Carlos Fuentes is the author of The Campaign. *This article is excerpted from* The Buried Mirror, *to be published by Houghton Mifflin in April.*

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cultural event. A whole civilization with a Hispanic pulse has been created in the United States. A literature has been born in this country, one that stresses autobiography—the personal narrative, memories of childhood, the family album—as a way of answering the question, What does it mean to be a Chicano, a Mexican-American, a Puerto Rican living in Manhattan, a second-generation Cuban-American living in exile in Miami? For example, consider the varied work of Rudolfo Anaya (*Bless Me, Ultima*), Ron Arías (*The Road to Tamazunchale*), Ernesto Galarza (*Barrio Boy*), Alejandro Morales (*The Brick People*), Arturo Islas (*The Rain God*), Tomás Rivera (*Y No Se lo Trago la Tierra*) and Rolando Hinojosa (*The Valley*); or of the women writers Sandra Cisneros (*Woman Hollering Creek*), Dolores Prida (*Beautiful Señoritas & Other Plays*) and Judith Ortiz Cofer (*The Line of the Sun*); or of the poets Alurista and Alberto Rios. Or consider the definitive statements of Rosario Ferré or Luis Rafael Sánchez, who simply decided to write in Spanish from the island of Puerto Rico.

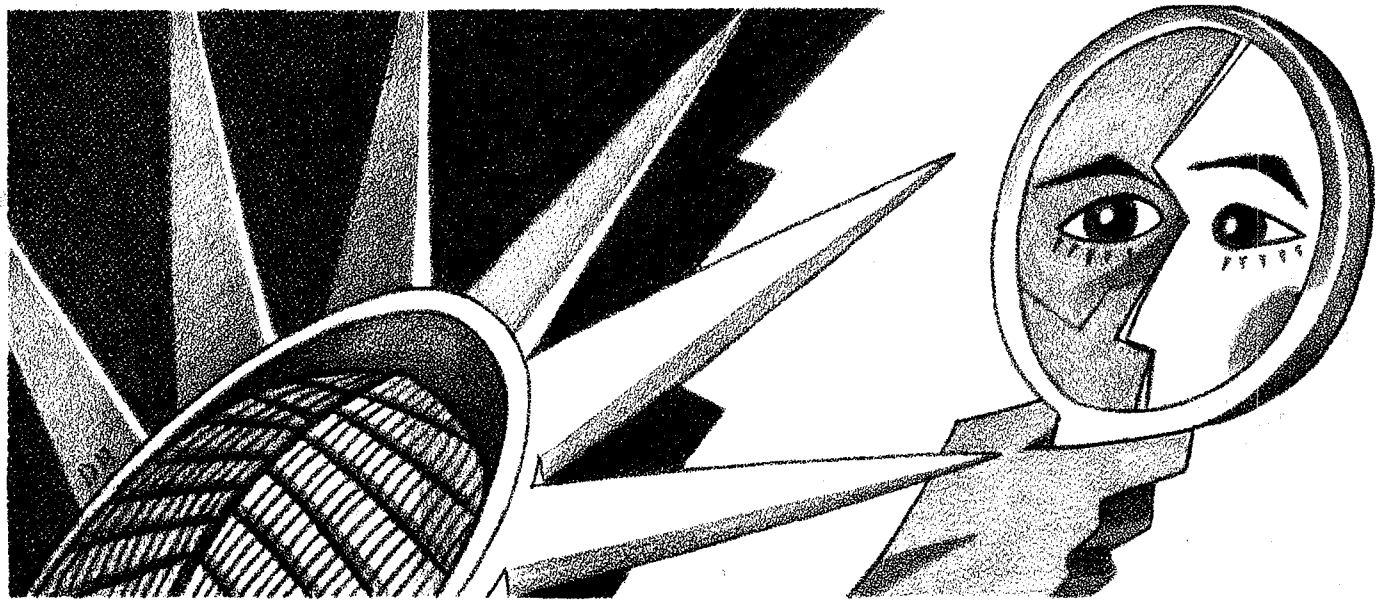
An art has also been created here; in a violent, even garish way, it joins a tradition going all the way from the caves of Altamira to the graffiti of East Los Angeles. It includes pictures of memory and dynamic paintings of clashes, like the car-crash paintings of Carlos Almaráz, who was part of the group called Los Four, along with Frank Romero, Beto de la Rocha and Gilbert Luján. The beauty and violence of these artists' work not only contribute to the need for contact between cultures that must refuse complacency or submission to injustice in order to become alive to one another. They also assert an identity that deserves to be respected and that must be given shape if it is not visible, or a musical beat if it is inaudible. And if the other culture, the Anglo mainstream, denies Hispanic culture a past, then artists of Latin origin must invent, if necessary, an origin. And they must remember every single link that binds them to it.

For example, can one be a Chicano artist in Los Angeles without upholding the memory of Martín Ramírez? Born in 1885, Ramírez was a migrant railroad worker from Mexico who lost his speech and for this was condemned to live for three decades in a California madhouse, until his death in 1960. He was not mad, he was just speechless. So he became an artist, and drew his muteness for thirty years.

No wonder that the Hispanic culture of the United States must manifest itself as forcefully as in a Luján painting; as dramatically as in a stage production by Luis Valdez; with a prose as powerful as that of Oscar Hijuelos with his mambo kings; or with a beat as life giving as that of Rubén Blades in his salsa songs of city woes and streetwise humor.

This vast flow of negation and affirmation forces newcomers as well as native Hispanics to ask themselves, "What do we bring? What would we like to retain? What do we want to offer this country?" The answers are determined by the fact that these people reflect a very broad social group that includes families, individuals, whole communities and networks, transmitting values, memories, traditions. At one end of the spectrum are 300,000 Hispanic businessmen prospering in the United States, and at the other is a 19-year-old Anglo-American shooting two immigrants to death for the simple reason that he "hates Mexicans." If one proudly spouts the statistic that Hispanic-owned businesses generate more than $20 billion a year, one can also, far less proudly, report that immigrants are shot at by Anglos with the paint-pellet guns used in mock warfare games. If one records that whole communities in Mexico are supported by the *remesas*, or remittances, of their migrant workers in the United States, and that these *remesas* add up to $4 billion a year and are Mexico's second-largest source of foreign income (after oil), then one must also record that many migrant workers are run down by vehicles on back roads near their campsites. And if, finally, one realizes that the majority of Mexican immigrants are temporary and eventually return to Mexico, then one must bear in mind the persisting differences between Anglo-America and Ibero-America, as these continue to oppose, influence and clash with each other.

The two cultures coexist, rubbing shoulders and questioning each other. We have too many common problems, which demand cooperation and understanding in a new world context, to clash as much as we do. We recognize each other



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more and more in challenges such as dealing with drugs, crime, the homeless and the environment. But as the formerly homogeneous society of the United States faces the immigration of vastly heterogeneous groups, Latin America faces the breakdown of the formerly homogeneous spheres of political, military and religious power through the movement of the urban dispossessed.

In this movement, which is taking place in all directions, we all give something to one another. The United States brings its own culture—the influence of its films, its music, its books, its ideas, its journalism, its politics and its language—to each and every country in Latin America. We are not frightened by this, because we feel that our own culture is strong enough, and that, in effect, the enchilada can coexist with the hamburger. Cultures only flourish in contact with others; they perish in isolation.

People and their cultures perish in isolation, but they are born or reborn in contact with other men and women.

The culture of Spanish America also brings its own gifts. When asked, both new immigrants and long-established Hispanic-Americans speak of religion—not only Catholicism but something more like a deep sense of the sacred, a recognition that the world is holy, which is probably the oldest and deepest certitude in the Amerindian world. This is also a sensuous, tactile religion, a product of the meeting between the Mediterranean civilization and the Indian world of the Americas.

Then there is care and respect for elders, something called *respeto*—respect for experience and continuity, less than awe at change and novelty. This respect is not limited to old age in itself; in a basically oral culture, the old are the ones who remember stories, who have the store of memory. One could almost say that when an old man or an old woman dies in the Hispanic world, a whole library dies with that person.

And of course there is the family—family commitment, fighting to keep the family together, perhaps not avoiding poverty but certainly avoiding a *lonely* poverty. The family is regarded as the hearth, the sustaining warmth. It is almost a political party, the parliament of the social microcosm and the security net in times of trouble. And when have times not been troubled? The ancient stoic philosophy from Roman Iberia is deep indeed in the soul of Hispanics.

What else do Ibero-Americans bring to the United States? What would they like to retain? It is obvious they would like to keep their language, the Spanish language. Some urge them to forget it, to integrate by using the dominant language, English. Others argue that they should use Spanish only to learn English and join the mainstream. More and more often, however, people are starting to understand that speaking more than one language does not harm anyone. There are automobile stickers in Texas that read MONOLINGUALISM IS A CURABLE DISEASE. Is monolingualism unifying and bilingualism disruptive? Or is monolingualism sterile and bilingualism fertile? The California state law decreeing that English is the official language of the state proves only one thing: that English is no longer the official language of California.

Multilingualism, then, appears as the harbinger of a multicultural world, of which Los Angeles is the prime example. A modern Byzantium, the City of the Angels receives each day, willy-nilly, the languages, the food, the mores not only of Spanish-Americans but of Vietnamese, Koreans, Chinese, Japanese. This is the price—or the gift, depending on how you look at it—of global interdependence and communications.

So the cultural dilemma of the American of Mexican, Cuban or Puerto Rican descent is suddenly universalized: to integrate or not? to maintain a personality and add to the diversity of North American society, or to fade away into anonymity in the name of the after-all nonexistent "melting pot"? Well, perhaps the question is really, once more, to be or not to be? to be with others or to be alone? Isolation means death. Encounter means birth, even rebirth.

California, and especially Los Angeles, a gateway to both Asia and Latin America, poses the universal question of the coming century: How do we deal with the Other? North Africans in France; Turks in Germany; Vietnamese in Czechoslovakia; Pakistanis in Britain; black Africans in Italy; Japanese, Koreans, Chinese and Latin Americans in the United States: Instant communications and economic interdependence have transformed what was once an isolated situation into a universal, defining, all-embracing reality of the twenty-first century.

Is anyone better prepared to deal with this central issue of dealing with the Other than we, the Spanish, the Spanish-Americans, the Hispanics in the United States? We are Indian, black, European, but above all mixed, mestizo. We are Iberian and Greek; Roman and Jewish; Arab, Gothic and Gypsy. Spain and the New World are centers where multiple cultures meet—centers of incorporation, not of exclusion. When we exclude, we betray ourselves. When we include, we find ourselves.

Who are these Hispanic "ourselves"? Perhaps no story better renders the simultaneity of cultures than "The Aleph," by the Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges. In "The Aleph," the narrator finds a perfect instant in time and space where all the places in the world can be seen at the same moment, without confusion, from every angle, in perfect, simultaneous existence. What we would see in the Spanish-American aleph would be the Indian sense of sacredness, communality and the will to survive; the Mediterranean legacy of law, philosophy and the Christian, Jewish and Arab strains making up a multiracial Spain; and the New World's challenge to Spain, the syncretic, baroque continuation of the multicultural and multiracial experience, now including Indian, European and black African contributions. We would see a struggle for democracy and for revolution, coming all the way from the medieval townships and from the ideas of the European Enlightenment, but meeting our true personal and communal experience in Zapata's villages, on Bolívar's plains, in Tupac Amaru's highlands.

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And we would then see the past becoming present in one seamless creation. The Indian world becomes present in the paintings of Rufino Tamayo, who was born in an Indian village in Oaxaca and whose modern art includes an Indian continuity in the sense of color and the spirit of celebration, in the cosmic consciousness and in Tamayo's capacity to recreate on canvas the dream of a form that *can* contain dreams. A younger painter, Francisco Toledo, also from an Indian village in Oaxaca, gives the ancient Indian fear and love of nature their most physical and visual proximity to our urban lives, while the Cuban Wifredo Lam permits his African roots to grow in his pictures. The Mexican painter Alberto Gironella bitingly recovers the traditions of Spanish art and commerce: His Velázquez spinoffs are framed by sardine cans.

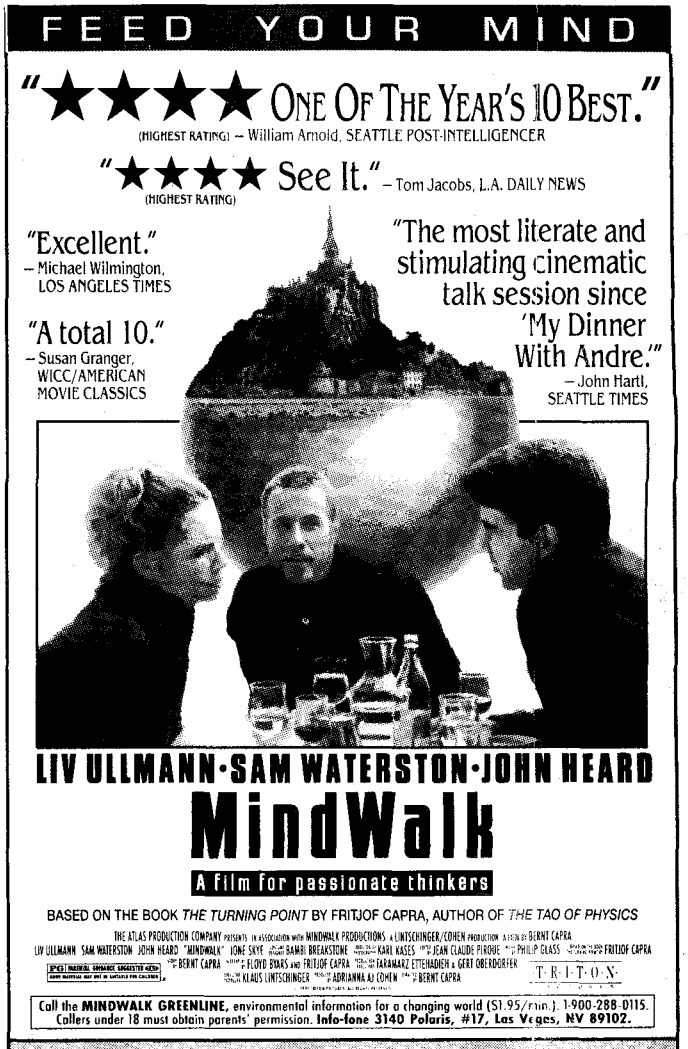
Culture is the way we laugh, even at ourselves, as in the paintings of the Colombian Fernando Botero. It is the way we remember, as when the Venezuelan Jacobo Borges imagines the endless tunnel of memory. But culture is above all our bodies, our bodies so often sacrificed and denied, our shackled, dreaming, carnal bodies, like the body of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Our bodies are deformed and dreamy creatures in the art of the Mexican José Luis Cuevas. Indeed, like Goya, Cuevas offers the mirror of imagination as the only truth; his figures are the offspring of our nightmares, but also the brothers and sisters of our desires.

The union of Cuevas in the Americas with Goya in Spain also reminds us that when we embrace the Other, we not only meet ourselves, we embrace the marginal images that the modern world, optimistic and progressive as it has been, has shunned and has then paid a price for forgetting. The conventional values of middle-class Western society were brutally shattered in the two world wars and in the totalitarian experience. Spain and Spanish America have never fooled themselves on this account. Goya's "black paintings" are perhaps the most lasting reminder we have of the price of losing the tragic sense of life in exchange for the illusion of progress. Goya asks us again and again to harbor no illusions. We are captive within society. Poverty does not make anyone kinder, only more ruthless. Nature is deaf to our pleas. It cannot save the innocent victim; history, like Saturn, devours its own children.

Goya asks us to avoid complacency. The art of Spain and Spanish America is a constant reminder of the cruelty that we can exercise on our fellow human beings. But like all tragic art, it asks us first to take a hard look at the consequences of our actions, and to respect the passage of time so that we can transform our experience into knowledge. Acting on knowledge, we can have hope that this time we shall prevail.

We will be able to embrace the Other, enlarging our human possibility. People and their cultures perish in isolation, but they are born or reborn in contact with other men and women, with men and women of another culture, another creed, another race. If we do not recognize our humanity in others, we shall not recognize it in ourselves.

Often we have failed to meet this challenge. But we have finally seen ourselves whole in the unburied mirror of identity only when accompanied—ourselves with others. We can hear the voice of the poet Pablo Neruda exclaiming throughout this vision, "I am here to sing this history." □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MURDER IN A SHANTYTOWN

Shining Path's War on Hope

ROBIN KIRK

The murder of shantytown activist Maria Elena Moyano last month marks a grim new chapter in Peru's eleven years of political violence. Like Brazilian rain-forest leader Chico Mendes, murdered in 1988, Moyano represented a new generation of Latin American leaders—not white, often female, with a solid constituency in the impoverished community where her family had staked its future. But unlike that of Mendes, Moyano's death will provoke little international outrage. Few foreigners feel as strongly about self-help movements in Latin America's "young towns" as they do about the rain forest. Moreover, Moyano's assassins came from the far left—the Communist Party of Peru–Shining Path, Maoist guerrillas who want to build a totalitarian state modeled on the most vicious years of China's Cultural Revolution. The message for Peruvians is that terror, not broad support, is what the Shining Path believes will drive its insurgency into power.

I went to meet Moyano last September in Villa El Salvador, the shantytown where she lived with her husband and two sons. The morning was gray and damp, and Villa lay dark as a shadow beneath the grime-encrusted dunes south of Lima. But despite its grim aspect, for the people who live here Villa means victory. It is a symbol of how poor people, working together, can make for themselves decent, productive lives. No one personified that victory more than Moyano. A black woman with an electric, gap-toothed smile, she was 12 years old when her parents participated in the land takeover that led to the founding of Villa in 1971.

Although both men and women built Villa, the case can be made that women like Moyano dreamed it awake. It was women who defended their few square feet of shifting sand from police evictions, believing in the houses that would one day stand there. Even as they worked sixty-hour weeks as washerwomen and maids, they spent their nights and days off circulating petitions for water, bus lines and electricity.

Over time, Villa's 300,000 residents organized their own government, schools, health clinics and an industrial park that is a model for Third World entrepreneurs. As a youth, Moyano was active in her neighborhood and became president of the Women's Federation. In 1989, at 30, she was elected deputy mayor on the United Left ticket.

Aggressive and eloquent, Moyano was not afraid to lead the marches that often ended in pitched battles with police under stinging clouds of tear gas. Her battles were many: against sexism, racism and economic injustice, but especially against poverty. Recent economic austerity measures have left most Peruvians worse off than they were two decades ago, and small businesses, which once flourished in Villa, have been hit hardest. On the day she was murdered, she had arranged the delivery of tons of donated food to Villa soup kitchens.

But last September, a new enemy emerged. Hurt by recent defeats in rural Peru, the Shining Path has made the shantytowns of Lima its new battleground. Guerrillas blew up a warehouse that supplied ninety-two Villa soup kitchens. Local leaders were threatened and killed. In another shantytown, a man who refused to let the Shining Path use a community loudspeaker was dragged out of his shack and shot. The neighbor who tried to save him was stoned to death.

Moyano came under special attack. Guerrillas called her leftist politics "revisionist" and claimed she had stolen soup-kitchen money, an accusation Villa residents considered absurd. Nevertheless, guerrillas vowed to "annihilate" her.

The assassins had been there for hours, waiting.

The reason the Shining Path, which vows to end injustice, wants to kill people like Moyano lies in its macabre logic of "people's war." The guerrillas want to convert grass-roots organizations into "people's committees," which would become part of an all-out offensive against Peru's government. Rather than feed, educate or heal people, they want to "deepen the contradictions"—that is, create more hunger, disease and death. Then, the theory goes, people will feel compelled to fight on the guerrillas' side.

"For a while, I thought the Shining Path was wrong, but at least they were fighting for justice," Moyano once told an interviewer. "But when they began to attack and kill local leaders, I repudiated them openly. What they want is to stifle independent organization so that malnutrition and death increase, and so favor their push for total war."

Moyano got in their way. After the warehouse bombing, she led the first-ever open march in Villa against the Shining Path. In speeches and interviews, she condemned their tactics. To defeat them, she said, "we must root out fear."

It was a courageous, perhaps foolhardy, move. Many condemn the Shining Path, but few do so with such vehemence because they know that a neighbor or a casual passer-by could be a trained assassin. Senderistas, as they are called, have murdered hundreds of mayors, local leaders and development workers who opposed them.

Moyano never showed up for our September interview. Protected by four bodyguards, she had been varying her schedule so much, to throw off a potential attempt on her life, that it had escaped her memory entirely. Security specialists tell me that 100 bodyguards can't insure a life. On February 15, her bodyguard, police officer Roger Bocanegro, was shot as Moyano chatted with people attending a chicken barbecue meant to raise funds for Villa's hungry children. Some inside knew what was happening, but no one warned her. They were

Robin Kirk is a contributing editor of Pacific News Service. She writes frequently for U.S. newspapers and magazines.

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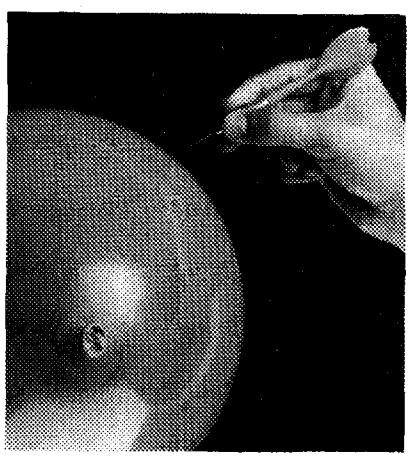

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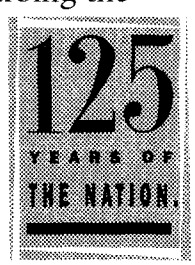

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too frightened. The assassins had been there for hours, eating chicken, waiting.

I would bet Moyano knew the woman who caught her, forced her down, shot her in the temple, then dropped five pounds of dynamite in her lap. And unlike the sleek politicos who packed her funeral—the ones who talk a lot about making a more just society but who live in comfort behind high walls and guard dogs—Moyano knew what could fuel such a wild, desperate act. "Our politicians are more interested in their speeches than the economic situation, and are completely cut off from the grass roots," she once said. "But our youth are rebellious, impulsive. In the Shining Path, you see expressed their doubts and frustrations about their lack of a future. It is a mystique, a total commitment, that seems to answer their hunger for a complete change."

Most Peruvians are not guerrillas. But Moyano was too much of a realist to pretend they have no support in Villa. As I waited for her that gloomy morning, her secretary pointed out for me the rickety shacks, high in the dunes, where the guerrilla columns move at night. "The poorest of the poor," she said.

Moyano knew she had to compete with them, defeat their message of terror with her own message of hope. With her murder, hope is not lost. But in Villa, where the only forest is the one people plant and tend and where it never, ever rains, terror seems now to be in the lead. □

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The Case for Preservation

PETER KORN

In 1973 Congress unwittingly passed the most effective and benevolent piece of environmental legislation ever enacted in the United States. It took about fifteen years before environmentalists began to recognize and make full use of the Endangered Species Act, but now that they have, the natural resources of the West, and the battles over their development and protection, will never be the same.

From a conservationist viewpoint, the difference is between fighting battles and fighting wars. The history of conservationism in this country is marked by small victories that, over the length of time, usually yield to development interests. A river may be cleaned up here, a shoreline protected there, but over time the march of what we once unabashedly called progress would triumph. President Jimmy Carter's landmark legislation establishing the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge appeared to lock up a sizable portion of wilderness; more than a decade later the refuge still exists, but it appears oil drilling is about to begin there.

The Endangered Species Act has proved to be a much more definitive piece of conservation legislation. For one thing, it works. The act has changed the ground rules of environmental-

Peter Korn writes frequently on environmental issues.

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ism, finally giving the environmentalists a weapon with which to battle development interests to a standoff. Because of the act, as many as 8 million acres of untouched, ancient forests in the Pacific Northwest might be made off-limits to the relentless crackle of chain saws. Development projects such as dams and subdivisions have been discarded or delayed.

But now the development interests have begun to amass their political forces to reverse this shift in power. They are planning a frontal assault on the law when it comes up for renewal in this session of Congress. The outcome of the battle will determine the potency of environmentalism for decades to come, not to mention the fate of thousands of endangered plant and animal species.

First, some history. What most distinguishes the act as a piece of environmental legislation is how far it goes. It puts protection of species ahead of all considerations—a highly moral position (or perhaps an oversight). When H.R. 37 became the Endangered Species Act in 1973 it encountered little opposition. Promoters of the act spoke of saving eagles, buffaloes and grizzly bears. Who could vote against such high-profile beneficiaries? Nobody mentioned spotted owls and snail darters, or the thousands of species of plants and insects also facing extinction. And nobody considered that the act might work retroactively. It's one thing for a snail darter to hold up construction of a dam, another for an owl or salmon to alter an already established infrastructure—the Pacific Northwest's logging industry, in the owl's case.

Oregon Senator Bob Packwood voted for the act in 1973 but is now leading the efforts to modify it. "It just never occurred to us the extraordinary ramifications of the act," Packwood says. "We were thinking projects, we were thinking site specifics. We were not thinking ecosystems." But ecosystems are what they've got. Three years ago the spotted owl gained listing as a threatened species. The owl lives only in old-growth forests. Preserving the species has meant preserving the owl's lumber-rich ecosystem—the ancient forests.

Controversy has dogged the law since its inception. In 1977 construction was delayed on Tellico Dam in Tennessee with the discovery of the snail darter, a tiny fish that existed only in the Little Tennessee River and would vanish if the dam were completed. The Tennessee Congressional delegation subsequently led an assault on section seven of the act, which requires the federal government to prevent destruction of endangered species' habitats. Arguing before the Supreme Court, Griffin Bell, attorney for the Tennessee Valley Authority, held up a small glass jar containing a snail darter and asked the Court how a three-inch fish could be valued more highly than a multimillion-dollar dam. The Court ruled for the fish. The act's pre-eminent power was upheld, though in 1979 the fish were transplanted and the dam constructed under a rare legislative exception passed by Congress.

The key to the act's draconian effect is its insistence, in section four, that listings be made solely on the basis of scientific evidence. Economic impact can be considered only during implementation of the measures recommended to preserve the species.

Sometimes the law yields tremendous results—the bald eagle, alligator, brown pelican and peregrine falcon all recovered after gaining the act's protection. But there have been

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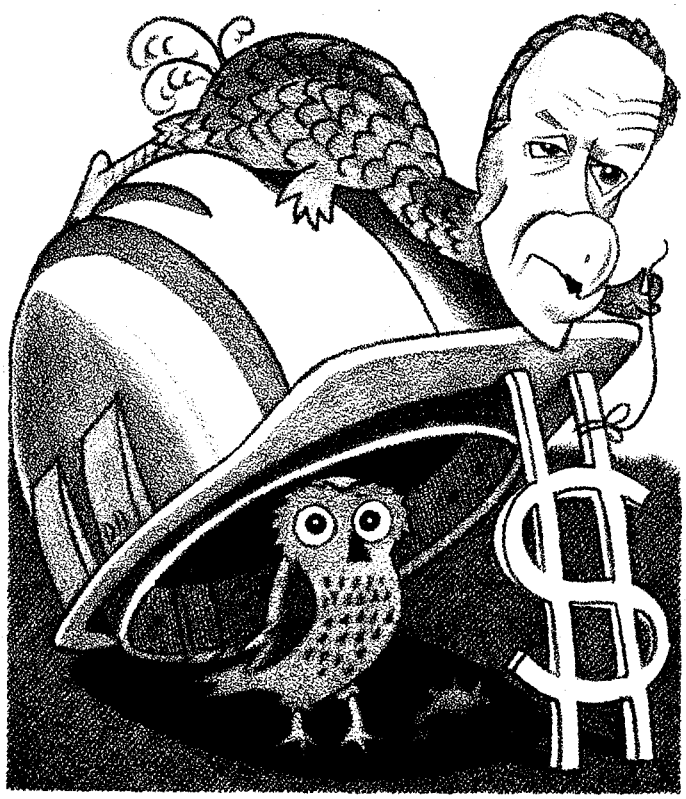
losses: In 1987 the last dusky seaside sparrow died in captivity. The losses continue in the United States partly because there is a backlog of more than 4,000 candidates for listing. Well under a quarter of the threatened species in this country are officially listed and protected, and 40 percent of those listed still await recovery plans. The reluctance of federal agencies to list species without pressure from environmental lawsuits indicates a political motivation for some of the delay. But most often the cause is an overburdened government agency. The act does not set a firm deadline for action by the Secretary of the Interior on a petition for listing. Some declining species may wait decades before receiving a ruling, and some species perish waiting for listing.

Nevertheless, the act represents a gold mine of possibilities for environmentalists and their attorneys. Government agencies have tended to interpret the law narrowly, but time after time in court, environmentalists have found the weapon they need in the act's language.

Which brings us to the recently listed Snake River coho and chinook salmon runs. The cost of the owl rulings has been borne primarily by the logging community. The number of jobs lost in the timber industry because of habitat preservation ranges from 10,000 to 100,000, depending on who supplies the figures. But the recovery plan for the salmon would affect an entire region: Farmers, fishermen, loggers and the aluminum and transportation industries all benefit from the rivers in one way or another, and will have to give up some of their interests to save the salmon. Thanks to the hydroelectric dams on the Columbia River, electricity rates in the Northwest are 40 percent of the national average. Those same dams, however, are responsible for death rates as high as 80 percent for juvenile salmon migrating to sea. So the general public may have to pay higher electric rates if dams are shut down during salmon migration months [see Clay Hathorn, "Save Our Salmon, Save Our Soul," January 6/13].



Salmon once thrived in rivers in the lower forty-eight states: up and down the East Coast, and on the West Coast well down into California. Now, with a few exceptions, they are limited to rivers in the Northwest. The American Fisheries Society, an organization primarily comprising fisheries scientists, lists 214 wild runs of West Coast salmon, and steelhead and cutthroat trout in some danger of extinction. The society found 159 of these at high or moderate risk of extinction, yet only one is protected under the act. So more listings could follow.

All of which has a lot of people asking, Why go to such lengths to preserve a species? The Global 2000 Report, issued during the Carter Administration, predicts that as many as 20 percent of the earth's species will become extinct by the turn of the century—that's approximately 2 million life forms. There is no way to measure the worth of those species. But every now and then, we learn the value of maintaining the genetic diversity of the earth's ecosystem.

The rosy periwinkle, a tropical flower, is used to treat leukemia. Tree poachers have been stripping Pacific yews since scientists discovered that the tree's bark offers new hope in the treatment of ovarian cancer. Ironically, the yew, which is found in the Northwest's old-growth forests, might be extinct if not for protection afforded those ecosystems; now some cancer sufferers are willing to drive the tree to extinction in order to obtain treatment. There are other reasons for saving endangered species. The most obvious is simply that by preserving the earth's genetic pool we keep open future options for nature and science to maintain a healthy environment. There is a growing understanding that all life forms are part of one interdependent ecosystem, and the declining health of one species signals danger for all species, including humans. For "glamour" species, such as grizzly bears, there is an aesthetic argument to be made. And there are moral considerations: Humans should not try to play God by deciding which species are more important than others.

Every few years the Endangered Species Act comes up for renewal. It has been amended five times, but the coming battle promises to be the most heated. The effects of the owl and salmon listings have motivated some to seek changes, and the ranks of the dissatisfied have grown.

Timber interests in the Southeast have been hurt by the listing of the red cockaded woodpecker. Construction of a dam for the Animas La Plata water project in Colorado has been delayed by a dispute over the Colorado River squawfish, sending water interests into the legislative fray. In Southern California, listing of the Stevens kangaroo rat as endangered has held up Riverside County housing development, pushing real estate developers and home builders into the camp of those who would amend the act. In fact, a report issued recently by a White House advisory commission singled out the Endangered Species Act as a primary regulatory program adding to the cost of housing.

In response, conservationists have formed a coalition to fight efforts to weaken the law. Their numbers run the gamut of environmental organizations, from Greenpeace to the Garden Club of America. Michael Bean, an attorney with the En-

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vironmental Defense Fund who serves as a strategist for the coalition, calls the act "fundamentally sound." Bean knows the most significant battle will be whether to introduce economic considerations into the decision to list a species. A secondary front will focus on the act's protection of subspecies and populations. Currently, it protects some endangered species—for example, the bald eagle—in the contiguous United States, even though the species may thrive elsewhere in the country. Indeed, the bald eagle and grizzly bear were never endangered in Alaska, but this did not deter protection in the Lower 48. The same holds for the act's protection of endangered subspecies of salmon, even though a few salmon runs remain healthy.

One of the most controversial elements of the act is the exemption process, which was added in 1978 in response to the snail darter episode. This allows the President to convene a panel, dubbed the "god squad," to exempt protected species from coverage of the act. Recently the god squad reassembled to consider overruling a number of spotted-owl forest setasides in favor of logging. For his part, Bean favors improvements in dealing with the backlog of candidate species, either by expediting the listing process or by extending some protection to species while they await a listing decision. Senator Packwood is confident he will be able to push through changes dictating that economic impact be considered in the listing process. "I think the momentum is growing, saying we ought to have a balance," he says.

On the environmentalists' side, Andy Kerr of the Oregon Natural Resources Council says, "We all know we're going to have to empty the benches for this one." Kerr says the act has become "the law of last resort." What he would like is to have an early warning system built into the legislation in order to target species that are declining but not yet endangered. Others have suggested that the Endangered Species Act misses the point, and that what is needed is an Endangered Ecosystems Act.

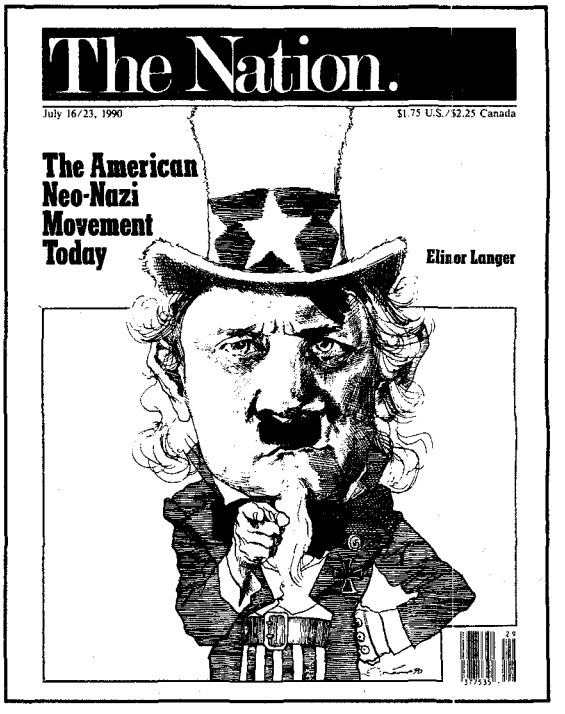
Hidden behind the debate that will rage in Congress this session are two unanswerable questions: How much is a species worth, and how much dominion over those species should humans have? It's one thing to save a species of animal or plant from extinction because it may one day provide a technological use to people, as with the yew tree. But opponents of the act as it now stands question whether a species of owl is worth 20,000 jobs, or whether maintaining wild salmon in our rivers is worth higher electric rates.

Congress will debate the language of the act, but probably not its morality. And if Packwood and his colleagues are able to change the law so that economic factors are taken into consideration before a species can be listed, the act's entire underpinning will have been compromised. Then, saving species will become a matter for bureaucratic rule, a weighing of conflicting interests.

The uniqueness of the act is that government agencies are virtually unable to contravene its clear intent—to save species at all costs. "We aren't so poor that we have to drive species into extinction, nor are we so rich that we can afford to," says Kerr. If the Endangered Species Act itself becomes endangered, more species will surely follow. □

—BULK ORDERS—

THE AMERICAN NEO-NAZI MOVEMENT TODAY



Does David Duke scare you? He's not alone. In *The Nation* special issue "The American Neo-Nazi Movement Today," published in the summer of 1990, Elinor Langer examines the alarming growth of white, neofascist groups in the 1980s and '90s. Langer's investigation of Duke, WAR's Tom Metzger and others illustrates the hatemongers' rising power and growing sense of common purpose. Most alarmingly, Langer explains that although they are ostensibly an extremist minority, these groups embody sentiments commonly expressed by everyday Americans. Duke's presidential run is more than a showdown with George Bush—arm yourself with the facts about his true agenda. Educators shouldn't miss the chance to order multiple copies of this special issue at our bulk rate.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

What Happened to Beauty?

ARTHUR C. DANTO

In early February, I spent a weekend at the University of Texas, invited there to consider, in the company of artists, critics, historians and philosophers of art, the question "Whatever Happened to Beauty?" The brochure publicizing the conference described a kind of shift in recent artistic direction, from the active pursuit of beauty to its disregard or even repudiation, as artists turned their energies in political rather than aesthetic directions. This has certainly been the steady complaint of politically conservative critics, who insist, pretty much against the entire history of art, from the Pan-Athenaic frieze and the Dying Gaul through David, Delacroix, Goya and Manet, to Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, that politics has no place in art. And this shift figures no less prominently in the agendas of radical critics as well, who have undertaken to demonstrate that art has been subversive where it appears to be most purely aesthetic—in the images of the Impressionists, for example. We were in any case to take these matters up, as well as such questions as whether there is an incompatibility between aesthetic pursuit and political engagement.

I wish that in preparing my own contribution I had remembered something the painter Brice Marden said in the course of an interview with his peer Pat Steir: "The idea of beauty can be offensive. . . . It doesn't deal with issues; political issues or social issues. But an issue that it does deal with is harmony." For I would then have realized the degree to which social and political issues are today framed in terms of disharmony, of strife and conflict and confrontation, when in truth the great political visions have been precisely of the harmonious society, and it would be difficult to think of a more exact criterion of political health than harmony. I might then have proposed that every beautiful work can be viewed as an allegory of political well-being, and disharmonic work as allegorical of social pathology. Instead, I used as my paradigm Robert Motherwell's *Elegies to the Spanish Republic*, inasmuch as they were incontestably beautiful and also had an undeniably political content. To be sure, one elegizes only what is beyond help because dead, and while it is interesting to speculate on why beauty seems our spontaneous need in the presence of loss—why we bring flowers to the graveside, or play music at the memorial service—one is left wondering whether beauty has any place at all when one employs art to change rather than merely lament a political reality. Whatever the case, my example suggested the possibility of an internal connection between beauty and meaning, and that had some philosophical promise I hope to develop on some other occasion.

There is now a convulsion in the deep structure of cultural history, with beauty seeming irrelevant to art rather than antithetical to politics.

It was a stimulating conference if an inconclusive one; but it was not until I was back in New York that it occurred to me that something has indeed happened to beauty, though not for the reasons that formed the framework of our discussion in Texas. I don't think the opposition between aesthetics and politics, if there is one, quite accounts for beauty's predicament. What accounts for it instead is a kind of cultural convulsion we have been living through, in which beauty seems all at once irrelevant to the aims of art rather than antithetical to the aims of politics. It is a convulsion in what one might term the deep structure of cultural history, of which the bickering between conservatives and radicals is at best a surface manifestation. I think I had a certain sense of the onset of a convulsion when, in the early 1980s, I responded to the work of Julian Schnabel and David Salle with a kind of historical puzzlement, as if it interrupted rather than continued the narrative of modernism—as if, really, it had no internal connection with what came before it. This was not what was supposed to happen next. And in 1984—that allegorical year!—I expressed my malaise in an essay called "The End of Art." Thanks in part to the Texas conference but also to a felicitous constellation of recent exhibitions, I think I have a clear understanding of what Schnabel and Salle portended: They were, I now see, part of something much larger than I was able to appreciate at the time, and it is this larger event that I am calling a convulsion in culture.

A week after returning to New York, I attended two openings for artists whose new work would have encouraged in reply to the Texas question that beauty was alive and well on 57th Street. These were shows of Robert Mangold (at The Pace Gallery) and Dorothea Rockburne (at the André Emmerich Gallery). It is striking that both artists refer to classical motifs: Mangold explicitly terms his work *The Attic Series*; Rockburne's is a nuanced response to experiences of Rome, particularly the oculus in the Pantheon's extraordinary vault, which transforms that vast space into a kind of observatory. I suppose there might be moments when the circumference of the sun exactly matches that of the oculus, when the opening becomes a luminous disk—or a section through a column of light that rests on the floor, as if some divine visitation. In any case, Rockburne's paintings appear to connect sun and oculus in patterns of epicycles along sweeping orbits, circle upon circle, so that the entire pattern feels like a notation for celestial harmonies. The colors are those of rare stones, jasper and malachite, onyx and travertine, opal and alabaster. Bars fall across fields of color like shadows on the floors of churches. Her last show consisted of large geometries in flamboyant colors and embodied a certain tension between austerity and abandon. She has not forsaken her mathematical impulses in the new work but has somehow lyricized them.

And Mangold's new paintings also mark an evolution in thought and feeling. A few years ago he was showing paired but unmatched parallelograms with crazy corners and brindled surfaces, and interior forms, either drawn ovals or cutouts of eccentric parallelograms that refused to echo the irregular shapes that contained them. The new works are large, single rhomboidal shapes, with monochrome surfaces in rich colors, rolled on rather than brushed, but more densely and somehow more deeply than before, so

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they seem to coruscate. Interior to each surface is a single form, some variation on an ellipse, diagonally spread from corner to corner, sometimes twisted into an elongated figure eight, sometimes actually divided into subellipses, sometimes regimented into symmetrical triangles with a common vertex.

Both these shows—intense, ordered, humane, exultant, *beautiful*—are by painters at the peak of their strength and invention, and they lifted the spirits high enough to be palpably lowered by the exhibition of contemporary drawing at the Museum of Modern Art, in which beauty seems altogether beside the point. It is the difference in the art of these three exhibitions that makes the urgency of the question of beauty somehow existential. Entering the MoMA show is like a fall from grace, almost literally so as one descends to the museum's lower level on an escalator, along the path of which are hung Keith Haring's subway drawings of 1982, white chalk on black paper. Haring's drawings have a charm and even radiate a certain goodness, but they punctuated the shift from Greece and Rome in golden ages to Manhattan in the Reagan years, from sunlight to the netherworld, and they fix one abruptly in the present. Of course, Rockburne and Mangold belong to the present too. But the juxtaposition of the shows suggests a complexity in the present that I am anxious not to see dissolved away by talk of a benign sort of pluralism. Rockburne and Mangold stand in a certain continuity with a past that unites them with classical antiquity, with marble forms and cadenced architectures, with clarity, certainty, exactitude and the kind of universality Kant believed integral to our concept of beauty. With certain exceptions, the assembled drawings in the MoMA show exist in discontinuity with that past, and possibly repudiate it. It is the great merit of the show that it makes this discontinuity vivid and moves one to ponder the convulsion made as manifest as the spikes on a monitor do the fierce collisions in a particle accelerator underground.

MoMA's exhibition does this in large part because the same curator, Bernice Rose, mounted one in 1976 called "Drawing Now," and I think nothing in that earlier show would have enabled one to anticipate what was to happen in the visual arts over the next fifteen years. The difference is reflected even in the titles. "Drawing Now" has an indexical clarity that went perfectly with the kinds of drawings Rose had assembled, which col-

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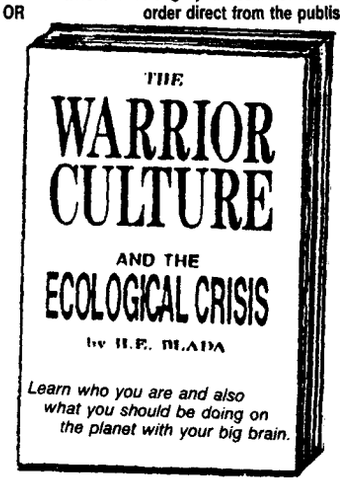
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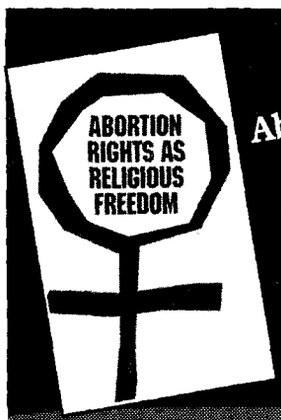

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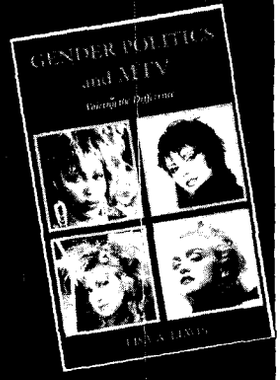

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lectively expressed a certain conceptual severity, a cleanness and purity and absoluteness that have all but vanished from contemporary sensibility. The title of the new show is "Allegories of Modernism," and it belongs exactly with the kind of language that entered critical discourse about the time the earlier show went up, but too late to affect either the art or the way people thought about it or described it. This is the discourse of deconstruction, postmodernity, textual metaphysics, of conceptual archeology, of art as *écriture*. Rockburne and Mangold were included in the earlier show, and their work today belongs to the spirit of it: Even the Pop Art then was analytical and somehow minimalist; many of the works had the look of theorems given graphic embodiment. Only three artists from there survive in the present show: Sol LeWitt, Bruce Nauman and Brice Marden, whose work alone, or almost alone, would provoke a judgment of beauty. The only earlier artist not included who might still have felt at home in the new show is Robert Rauschenberg, whose work had a layered look, with images torn from advertisements given a narrative role to play in a scrapbook sort of space composed of polyglot forms and scribblings. Rose's new effort has been criticized for including exactly those artists who are exhibited over and over again in all the big international shows: The large subset of American artists in it compose a mini Whitney Biennial. But this in fact is the show's strength. We are not dealing with the work of marginal figures but with mainstream art; and only because it is so massively mainstream is the contrast so acute between today and 1976. Only a reconstruction of the earlier show, run alongside "Allegories of Modernism," would have made the situation clearer. That way everyone could meditate on historical discontinuity. All one has to do is consult the earlier catalogue to see that we are in very different territory. Whatever happened to beauty happened sometime between 1976 and now.

Allegories are texts—verbal or visual—whose interpretation requires mastery of some symbolic code. The impulse to allegory is to tell one story through another, to reveal a meaning through another meaning. I think it may give a false unity to the MoMA show to suggest that each of the drawings is an allegory of modernism, that modernism is the oblique subject of the works or that these are all art about art. That would make modernism the motif of this show if the substance of the previous one; "Drawing Now" would then be what the new work is about in some deflected way. This may be true for some of the works—but since the remainder seem to participate in much the same aesthetic, it is the aesthetic that requires elucidation. In fact, "allegory" is itself an allegory, adopted to draw attention to the multiple levels on which each of the principal exhibits exists. As such, it is borrowed from an important text by the brilliant critic Craig Owens (who died tragically young from AIDS) published in the journal *October* on the cusp of the new era. Owens writes that an allegory is "one text . . . read through another, however fragmentary, intermittent, or chaotic their relationship may be; the paradigm for the allegorical work is thus the palimpsest." (It is clear from this why Rauschenberg almost uniquely from the earlier show belongs to the spirit of the new one.) Owens cites Walter Benjamin's observation about the propensity to "pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal." He speaks of the "blatant disregard for aesthetic categories." He speaks of "hybridization" and of the "confusion of the verbal and the visual." These fragments from an essay on fragments almost constitute a critical review of the present show. If we add to them a thought expressed by Hal Foster in a 1984 volume, *Art After Modernism*, in which Owens's essay was reprinted, we almost get the connection curator Rose's title implies: "Purity as an end and decorum as an effect" are things that "modernism privileges." What the present work privileges is instead impurity and the indecorous. Owens speaks of "the fragmentary, the imperfect, the incomplete" and of works so characterized as having an affinity to "the ruin." Rose's thought is this: Modernism itself lies shattered into fragments, an artistic ruin. But since these works *consist* of fragments, they compose allegories of modernism—"a new vision of the real."

The answer to "Whatever Happened to Beauty?" can perhaps be seen in part in the work of Sigmar Polke, the German artist we encounter in the first gallery of allegories, having completed our descent. There are six large drawings by him, five of them titled *Untitled*, plus a seventh very large drawing—about ten by fifteen feet—with the title *Motorcycle Headlight*. It is a very crude drawing on brown wrapping paper, of a scary face with handlebars, set against a sunburst of flying

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limbs. The paper looks as if soaked in grease, and it is held together with yellowing stretches of cellophane tape. "A conservator's nightmare," my companion murmured. "A nightmare," I conceded, echoically. It has the appearance of a Hell's Angels banner designed by a biker high on amphetamines and commanding zero degree of draftsmanship. But in fact almost all the drawing in these works is demotic, the kind that finds its way into tattoo parlors, prison wall graffiti, leaflets advertising garage sales. In the untitled works, several such drawings occur, assembled expressly not to cohere, sometimes occluded by wipes of paint. I freely admit to having problems with Polke, among them the fact that so many whose opinions I respect admire him extravagantly. John Baldessari ranks him with Giotto and Matisse in a pantheon of three. Last fall there was an immense Polke retrospective at The Brooklyn Museum, which I attended in the company of three of his enthusiasts, two of them German. A woman, hovering by, could not help but overhear our discussions and said, "You gentlemen seem conversant with art. Can you tell me something about this artist?" Rainer Crone, who is professor of modern art at Munich, replied with fervor, "He is unquestionably the greatest artist in the world." I remain unmoved. Peter Schjeldahl has written, "To learn more and more about him . . . is to know less and less." So perhaps I have learned too much.

Polke was born in 1941, and it is possible that the aesthetic of ruin derives from childhood trauma in a shattered land. It is also possible that, in the older spirit of Dada, his art is an indictment of the values of those responsible for the ruination of World War II. But that cannot explain the immense influence he has had on the artists who make up the majority of "Allegories," each of whom seems like a retranscription of Polke: derisive, sullen, hostile, punk. Demotic drawing almost defines the contemporary style, something at the intersection of crude cartooning, boilerplate illustration and graffiti—charmless, expressionless, flat, mechanical, smeared, logogrammatic. To be sure, there are exceptions, but I am referring to those drawings that satisfy Owens's criteria, that are allegories in the sense Rose has appropriated: antiaesthetic, palimpsestic, fragmented, chaotic, layered, hybridized. It is this that marks the convulsion I speak of, and there is more to it than this. Anything that explains the emergence of this form of art in the 1970s and its explosive proliferation through the 1980s also has to explain the kinds of critical theory that accepted, justified and celebrated it. Hal Foster, in the essay I mention, speaks of the impact on American art writers of texts that began to appear in translation in the late 1970s: Baudrillard, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School, Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Continental Feminism. In some way that parallels the art, these texts are marked by radical discontinuity, fragmentariness, obscurity, mock technicality. The writings belong together with the art they were used to interpret. The style of indignant incoherence, which characterizes the typical art writing of our era, is as much a product of Polke and Baudrillard as Attic tragedy was the offspring of Apollo and Dionysus.

The great value of the MoMA show is that you can see what happened to beauty, and set about trying to find an explanation. It is also possible that it is a mirror of our times—and since we have to live them, it is perhaps valuable to see them reflected in art. So in a sense the title for the show is appropriate: It is a lot more than simply what is happening in drawing now; the art is an allegory of the age. □

The Poetry Place

News this spring: A primary election of poems by American writers, some well-known, some emergent, all celebrating some transitory or indelible quality of the human spirit. —*Grace Schulman*

PEARL

> Suppose that a warrior forgot he was wearing his pearl on his forehead, and sought for it somewhere else . . . —Huang-Po

Well, I admit
A small boy's eyes grew rounder and lips moister
To find it invisibly chained, at home in the hollow
Of his mother's throat: the real, deepwater thing.
  Far from the mind at six to plumb
X-raywise those glimmering lamplit
Asymmetries to self-immolating mite
    Or angry grain of sand
Not yet proverbial. Yet his would be the hand
    Mottled with survival—
  She having slipped (how? when?) past reach—
  That one day grasped it. Sign of what
But wisdom's trophy. Time to mediate,
Skin upon skin, so cunningly they accrete,
  The input. For its early mote
      Of grit
  Reborn as orient moon to gloat
In verdict over the shucked, outsmarted meat. . . .
One layer, so to speak, of calcium carbonate
  That formed in me is the last shot
  —I took the seminar I teach
    In Loss to a revival—
Of Sasha Guitry's classic "Perles de la Couronne."
  The hero has tracked down
His prize. He's holding forth, that summer night,
At the ship's rail, all suavity and wit,
  Gem swaying like a pendulum
From his fing—oops! to soft bubble-blurred harpstring
Glissandi regaining depths (man the camera, follow)
Where an unconscious world, my yawning oyster,
    Shuts on it.

James Merrill

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SCORCHED

It comes back to me as the enigma
Of doorways and clocktowers, of standing
By an open window drenched in sunlight

And staring down at a drowsy piazza
Where a waiter is eternally cleaning a table
And two cats are squirming in the shadows.

3 p.m.: the hour of scorched absences,
The hour when the city sleeps like a widow
And a dogged couple in their thirties

Is forever trying to wring a child
From the clamor of each other's bodies
In a small pensione in the old quarter.

Look at them leaning against each other
In the hour of silences, the hour
Of nothing violated and nothing affirmed,

Of pleasure mixed with the fire of grief.
It is the wounded rite of infertility,
The inconceivable zero in the heart

Of summer, the cancellation, the void
Where what cannot be born is not born
And what does not exist will never exist.

Look at them cooling in each other's arms:
Two muffled bells molded from the heat,
Two bodies cast from the bright flames.

Edward Hirsch

ALPHABET

The truth is I dreaded each wide letter
and by extension the aging yellow-white pages
with the standard letter bearers—apple, zebra,
xylophone, coat. These physical counterparts
were secret code I would never crack—the yak,
its matted hair and soulful eyes, destined for slaughter
or a tundra isolation; the ball, untouched
in a sunless backyard, round and red and unattainable;
the blue dress on a white hanger,
freed of the sticky reminder of flesh. I knew
how they failed in that attempted joining
of physical and abstract, how each sound
fell short of the world. But fear gives way
to routine, and routine yields up
its indirection, that sing-song
also a simple path away
until what remains is as unnoticeable
and profound as mother's heartbeat and blood flow,
those first unviewed x's, their rhythm beat
into soft flesh as certainly as large black letters
embed into page—the traffic washing by at night,
the crickets speaking like martians, the wind
pushing dried leaves across cement in sudden bursts.
But when I close the book, they are already out
and hanging before me like dizzying hummingbirds,
my own thought refusing to settle or still
to definite line, but unable to return
to full quiet again.

Catherine French

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APPEARANCE AND REALITY

—in memory of May Swenson

Amphibian, crustacean? The nooked neck
Seems always in process of peering

Hesitantly out, or rapidly withdrawing,
Pulling its loose pleats tight again

Back in its turtle shell. It's like a small
Hand puppet returned to its lacquered box,

Or a small ferocious child imprisoned in
Shyness, but what if we picture

That same child, some long-ago August
In her Utah backyard examining a turtle

That feigns nonentity itself? Tapping it
Where it lies in the pool of her pinafore

With a fingernail to hear the tick,
She has to chuckle. She admires the dish shape,

Checks its polished markings, turns it over
To look at the tough olive underside,

Peers for the claws, the scratchy nails, and then
She wants to see its pursy face.

Shyness pink as the inside of a mouth,
A mouth she hopes with many sharpened teeth

And blue sandpaper tongue, rough like a cat's,
Sharp, too, all that's worth waiting for.

But when the beast emerges in response
To the child's patience,

Not interested in her, it begins instantly
To row away, off her pink cotton

Lap and across the dandelioned lawn,
Headed beyond the painted fence and sunlit

Sidewalk, it makes its escape underneath
The shadow of the blue Nash at the curb.

Quite gone, it leaves her the memory
Of weight and scurry, of dangled unmapped day.

So the child gets set to travel everywhere,
To take a trip by staying still, to take

The planet in, in fond curiosity—
Can it be true she never went anywhere?

For here she is, her tan face elderly
And infantile at once, mixed like geology,

A pleated map or complicated sphere
Under a cap of ash blond baby-hair

Blunt-cut, and so fine that the least breeze
Can lift up tender wisps of it,

Like bits of chick-fluff or kitten-fur,
She's feigning innocence, and letting wander

A pair of blue and stainless eyes,
Almost unlashed, bright as a baby bird's,

On a stocky body (like a Chinese lady's
In a kitchen) private and unembarrassed,

That curious face keeps pleasing itself
By watching stuff. It's friendly. Really a mammal.

Alicia Ostriker

CUCKOO

Perched on the telephone wire, long
tail flicking for balance, the cuckoo
who resembles a mourning dove or a small hawk
makes a music mocking both
his sculptured brothers. This loony
tune of his calls everything
into question, is his homage
to the dread of repetition we
avert our minds from: war and peace, storm
and shine, the shifting seasons and the
fickle moon are all the same
to his song of circles and nothing new.
In this terminal stoicism of sound, this
simplest gloss on things as they are,
he shines a pitiless light
at everything we put our minds to, seeing
the skull beneath the skin and, farther in,
the dark. Yet the message this angel
of absurdity brings down
to where we live and listen
isn't *Despair. Do nothing.* Rather
it is *Go on. Know the whole truth and then
go on.* We hear him
now in the somewhere over there,
no longer visible, only a voice, and we
look up from what we're doing, hardly
knowing what it is we've heard, not knowing
what to think. And then we
bend again, getting on with it.

Eamon Grennan

THE AFFAIR

"It *was* love at first sight—at first seeing!
That instant in the street our eyes met
we knew, and *saw* we knew, and foresaw what we
shall never understand—the dark oneness
whose shape whose grandeur only our months,
our years and years together would reveal.
Our passion, pining, our pain, our ecstasy,
the wonder of our feelings, of *feeling*,
the wonder we told each other: everything
two people possibly could live *we* lived.
Our final parting was like death. We died.
And neither was himself, herself, or whole, again."

So she said, so he said, to herself, to himself,
in the street while their relinquished gaze
was severing itself into two glances
they followed past each other, two strangers,
though moved alike, satisfied, renewed,
each having for one instant lived
as wholly as he could, as she could.

Irving Feldman

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WEEDS

Along a street of terrace houses
the vacant windows dispossess
each other of their lacy hints
of loveliness.

The sooty brick and paving stone
pattern a world in miniature.
Where victory gardens once were laid,
the weeds endure.

My aunt dried ragweed for her vases,
tall pollened stalks that made her wheeze
to the ticking of the mantel clock
and its obsequies.

Under her eyes my mother crushed
rose petals in a brute caress.
The weeds, ignored, invite perfection
of a uselessness.

Perhaps nothing survives. We die,
of whom that only is required,
ashamed of being, like the weeds,
undesired.

And nothing, even gratitude,
prevents our end in loss, or grants
the slow, sad arguments of grief
to the life of plants.

William Logan

PLUVIA

In the nation of rainy days
tractor-trailers spray and glissade
gray through rain down blacktop
with a sound like cloth tearing;
an airplane circles above clouds
that conceal the balding mountain
and engine-sounds waver like a dream
voice saying, "please, please,"

In the nation of rainy days,
the white cottage downstreet vanishes
into gray air, disappearing
like a vessel lost in a hurricane;
rain draws wavery vertical lines
against the black doors of a barn
and chimneysmoke kneels on flattened
grass, praying to dissipate.

In the nation of rainy days,
clouds hang tatters of shaggy muslin
as pale as winter on maples
that sink like shipwrecked cottages;
deer lost in overgrown orchards
dissolve in the mist and drizzle;
abandoned by honeybees, old roses
and soaked clover curve earthward.

Day after day, we wake to green rain
drenching the garden; we slog
through our chores slow-dancing
to rain's brute tune that drones
the same saturated phrase in the same
cadence again and again
like a lost airplane still circling
over the nation of rainy days.

Donald Hall

Goodbye to All That

ROSEMARIE PEGUEROS

OUT OF THE BARRIO: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation. *By Linda Chavez. Basic. 208 pp. $23.*

What is Linda Chavez running for? The Supreme Court has no openings, she lost her 1986 bid for the Senate to Barbara Mikulski (who got 62 percent of the vote) and she has shown little inclination to involve herself in electoral politics since that time. Yet her new book, *Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation*, reads like campaign literature.

Chavez's most direct intellectual precursor is Richard Rodriguez. His *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982) combines an intellectual autobiography (at the ripe old age of 37) with an impassioned condemnation of bilingual education and affirmative action programs. His meditations on his classical Indian features, his brown skin and the exclusion that he felt because of these are balanced against his fine Catholic-school education. He cannot continue, in good conscience, to benefit from affirmative action programs because, he declares, he is not part of a disadvantaged minority. He uses his experience as a "scholarship boy" to advocate the abolition of educational programs that boost those who are struggling to keep their heads above water. The irony of his conclusion is that most Hispanic youngsters do not have access to a good school. A recent study shows that Hispanic children are increasingly found in segregated schools that receive less funding than those for white children. Rodriguez calls for an educational revolution that will give all children an equal opportunity for advancement; viewed from the perspective of today's severe budget cuts in education, he seems quixotic.

The appearance of *Out of the Barrio* is timely. A number of African-American "affirmative action babies" have been publishing their books: Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character* [see Adolph Reed Jr., "Steele Trap," March 4, 1991]; Stephen Carter, *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby* [see Patricia J. Williams, "Nothing But the Best," November 18, 1991]; and in 1987 Clarence Thomas published his essay "Why Black Americans Should Look to Conservative Policies" in a Heritage Foundation pamphlet. What links these writings is the authors' claims of injury caused by their experiences with affirmative action. Rodriguez shares one notable characteristic with his African-American counterparts: In seeking to define the terms of the game, he is attempting to control his fate and that of his people. In his eyes, the acceptance of affirmative action by members of minority groups acknowledges the power of white men rather than promoting their own empowerment. Most of the minority public critics of affirmative action and other preferential programs are male, and all have benefited from affirmative action policies. The styles may differ, but the message is the same: Affirmative action is a flawed solution to the ills suffered by people of color in the United States; they would do better to pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

Chavez's tract continues the discussion opened by Rodriguez, but while his was an intensely personal account of the disadvantages of affirmative action and bilingual education—experiences that might have been less painful if the programs he attacked had been more fully realized—her book is largely impersonal. She argues that the Latino community is being manipulated by liberal activists to believe that its needs are similar to those of African-Americans. She cites statistics chosen in her attempt to prove that contrary to popular opinion, Chicanos are *not* a disadvantaged minority, and she puts as much space as she can between the black and the Chicano experience.

New Latin American immigrants and the poorest of the U.S.-born Hispanics, the real denizens of the barrio, would find little to identify with in this book. Despite its title, *Out of the Barrio* aims at the swiftly developing Mexican-American middle class, which has already left the barrio behind. There *is* a native conservatism in the Hispanic community, born of the historical interpenetration of the Catholic Church with Hispanic culture and the natural conservatism of immigrants, but the opinions and self-serving statistics offered by Chavez lack the resonance with Hispanic culture and the Latino community that would make them vibrant. Never is the reader shown Chavez's passion for Hispanic culture or her loyalty to the community: I wanted

Rosemarie Pegueros is a doctoral candidate in Latin American history at U.C.L.A.

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to shake her and say, "We are talking about *our* people."

Throughout the book, she minimizes the problems besetting the community, using skewed numbers to prove her arguments. She does not dwell on the large number of Hispanic students who drop out of school; she mentions only in passing the involvement of young Hispanics in gang activity; she minimizes the effect of the increasing segregation of Hispanic students and the consequent drop in funding for those schools. She virtually ignores women, except when discussing Puerto Rican women on welfare, and even fails to mention the small proportion of women from the Latino community who obtain university education, ignoring the fact that a minuscule number have risen as far as she has. Each of the problems hints at the deeper one: Hispanics are still far behind the mainstream in terms of income and education.

Chavez has absolutely no class analysis. She makes the same convenient mistake the government makes in trying to categorize the Latino community, lumping it together as though it were a homogeneous group and ignoring its multiclass, multi-ethnic, even multiracial nature. She fails to acknowledge the vast differences among, for example, the Cuban community, which is largely Republican and conservative; the long-established but poor Puerto Rican community in New York; the multifaceted Mexican communities in California and Texas; and the Salvadoran community, which is primarily composed of recent refugees. In discussing the Cuban community, for example, she dismisses out of hand the view that the success of Cubans can be attributed to their higher level of education. They succeeded because they worked hard, she claims, as if the rest of the Latinos in the U.S. have been snoozing under their sombreros.

If there are any problems in the Hispanic community, Chavez suggests, they are the fault of the community alone. Chavez blames Chicano activists, who she claims are blocking the way to complete assimilation by promoting Latino culture and bilingual education. But in reality, few community activists encourage a refusal to assimilate; instead, they promote the desire to maintain the essence of Latin culture. She almost seems to believe that there is a conspiracy of Hispanic leaders for the purpose of maintaining an identity as a minority community in order to hold on to preferential treatment programs. From this perspective, Chavez concentrates on those Latinos who have made it into the middle class, urging them to leave behind their culture and their values.

Chavez argues that past generations of immigrants were accepted because they agreed to the American contract: to adapt to the language, values and mores of the United States. She warns us that "when Hispanics insist that they do not have to follow the same rules as every group before them, they threaten this contract." Her prescription is easy: Follow the footsteps of earlier immigrants and assimilate.

But those immigrants entered a different country, one in which it was easier to rise from poverty. According to Michael Genzuk, vice president of the California Association for Bilingual Education, "fully 94 percent of the students at the turn of the century dropped out of school." Those young people could work with their hands in agrarian or industrial occupations. Now a much smaller dropout rate of 30-35 percent is a major problem because the manual labor market scarcely exists; idle hands result in higher crime rates, drug addiction and homelessness. Besides, becoming an American no longer requires abandoning one's own culture and language. The melting pot has been exchanged for an ideal of diversity.

More than any other group of immigrants, Latinos can expect deep class, ethnic and racial divisions to persist, because immigration will continue as long as extreme disparities of wealth and political instability continue to exist in Latin America and as long as it remains easy to enter this country illegally and disappear into a large Latino community.

Linda Chavez grew up in a poor neighborhood in Albuquerque, the child of a Mexican-American father who spoke little Spanish and a non-Hispanic mother. After her parents' divorce she moved with her mother to Denver. However her father's culture may have affected her privately, Chavez seems hardly to have identified with it: She speaks very little Spanish.

Her government career—she worked first for the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, then for the Office of Management and Budget's Constitutional Civil Rights Section, followed by a two-year stint as the highly visible executive director for the Commission on Civil Rights, and finally, after switching to the Republican Party in 1985, she served several years as the head of President Reagan's Public Liaison Office—has consisted of a string of appointments by powerful white men who saw the opportunity to use one of the few college-educated Hispanic women as a token. Even the job she took after she left public service, as director of U.S. English, reflected her token status.

Despite her opposition to affirmative action, she seems to have based her entire career on her ethnic identity. From the public record, it is impossible to determine just when Chavez's interest in her Hispanic roots translated into a desire to influence public policy pertaining to Hispanics. She has carved out a unique position as the Latina token of the Republican Party, assuring the leadership that she represents a solid constituency. Her failed attempts to win public office and the lack of support among Hispanics for the English-only movement, as well as her reputation as the most-hated U.S. Hispanic, belie that claim.

Chavez's underlying complaint seems to be that anyone who deviates from the "ethnic party line" is considered a heretic. Surely there is nothing in the Constitution that requires a member of a minority group to toe a politically correct line. Nevertheless, the individual with contrary opinions within a minority group necessarily arouses suspicion, particularly if, as in the case of Clarence Thomas or Linda Chavez, those views are meant to alter public policy. Consider that Chavez has made a career of expressing opinions radically at odds with most of the leadership of the Latino community in the United States; that she bases her credibility on her ethnic background; and that her ideas, if taken seriously, could adversely affect the lives of millions of Latinos whose feet are firmly grounded in the rich loam of their culture. Who stands to gain from a wide acceptance of her policies? It certainly isn't the Latino community. □

FILMS.

STUART KLAWANS

American Dream
The Killing Floor

Ray Rogers couldn't give an immediate answer when Local P-9 offered him a job. A freelance strategist for labor unions, he might well have jumped at a paycheck. But P-9 represented workers at the Hormel meatpacking plant in Austin, Minnesota—and Rogers was a vegetarian.

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Before he could say yes or no, he told P-9 president Jim Guyette, he'd have to spend some time learning about the industry.

Lewie Anderson, chief negotiator for P-9's parent union, the United Food and Commercial Workers, needed no such boning up. In fall 1985, when P-9 was in the early weeks of the long, bitter, divisive strike recorded by Barbara Kopple in *American Dream*, Anderson was busy negotiating ten major contracts. P-9's was not among them. The parent union had refused to support P-9's campaign against Hormel, calling it misguided and ultimately antiunion; in turn, P-9's leaders had chosen to negotiate on their own, suspecting Anderson of being a patsy for management.

He didn't look like a patsy, or a vegetarian either. Round-shouldered and paunchy, with thinning dark hair and a limp mustache, he wore the dyspeptic expression of someone who lives on a steady diet of sausage. One look at him and you can see why the P-9 rank and file, questions of militancy aside, might have preferred Ray Rogers. Robust, sandy-haired, with the smiling pugnacity of a young James Cagney, Rogers was "a great motivator," as even his detractors admitted. Maybe he didn't know the meatpacking industry, but he came to P-9 full of energy and fresh ideas about organizing in the 1980s. On the other hand, Anderson—a much tougher unionist than *his* detractors admitted—had a lifetime of experience in meatpacking; and unlike anyone on the P-9 team, he knew how to hammer out a contract. In a happier world, he and Rogers would have worked together against Hormel. Instead, a two-party struggle turned into a three-way fight, with management the inevitable winner. That, in brief, was the story of American labor in the 1980s. Played out at feature length, it is the substance of *American Dream*.

Kopple opens her film with a montage of TV news clips, the better to flash the story's context before your eyes. By the time P-9's contract was running out, unionbusting was once more government policy, not merely permitted but encouraged by the White House. Reagan himself had set the example during his first days in office, when he fired the entire membership of the striking air-traffic controllers' union and hired replacements. Perhaps the P-9 workers, like so many others, failed to get the point; but it was plain enough to Hormel's management. In a year when the company declared a $29 million profit, Hormel effectively cut workers' wages in half. A typical paycheck dropped from $637 a week to $312. Leaders of the parent union understood only too well the futility of fighting against such cuts—and such a climate—on a skirmish-by-skirmish basis. Had one of the locals won higher wages, Hormel could simply have closed that plant and moved the jobs to a low-wage area—Arkansas, let's say. Only concerted, nationwide organizing would have stopped Hormel. But from the evidence of *American Dream*, officials at the parent union had no stomach for such efforts.

This film is an urgent argument against the calculated impoverishment of working people.

Members of P-9, on the other hand, were desperate to take action; yet they were so limited in both power and point of view that militancy couldn't do them much good. Long years of union-management peace had lulled P-9's people into complacency. Kopple shows us footage from some cheesy-looking personnel-department film, to remind us of what P-9 was used to: an era of job security, comprehensive health care and regular wage increases. Like the workers Michael Moore showed us in *Roger & Me*, the P-9 members seem to have thought their company would remain nonantagonistic. When proved wrong, they had the spirit to fight but not the know-how. They still believed the billboard at the city limits, which read "Austin—Where the Good Life Is Here to Stay." They hadn't been on strike since the 1930s.

American Dream is both a sleek, gripping narrative of the P-9 strike and an argument, put forth with terrible urgency, against the calculated impoverishment of working people. For the sake of those two levels alone, I would gladly say that *American Dream* is the first must-see movie of 1992. What makes the film truly compelling, though, is its portraiture. The movie comes alive through the people it captures, from the P-9 leafleters at the beginning, politely bringing their case to the front door of the Hormel president's house, to the still-defiant woman at the end, who is packing up her kitchen because she now has to leave Austin. "We're just taking our fight elsewhere," she says steadily. These are some of the P-9 loyalists who trusted Kopple enough to let her tell their story. But there are others as well. She sat in with the P-9 dissidents, who didn't like Ray Rogers's campaign and wanted to stick with the parent union. She rode up to the picket line with some of these men, after they'd decided, with tears in their eyes, to go back to work. She talked with an out-of-town replacement worker, who explained very simply why he was scabbing—he'd been out of a job for six years. When the strike literally turned brother against brother, Kopple was there to record the soul-searching on both sides.

How did Kopple manage to get so many different people on camera? In a recent phone conversation, she told me the key was "sheer perseverance. We managed to build trust, just because we were around for such a long time. People understood this wasn't being shot for the nightly news." Even so, it wasn't always easy for her to get access. Meetings between P-9's leaders and the parent union were difficult to record "because the old-guard guys felt that union meetings are sacred, and some of them didn't want me in the middle of such a volatile situation. I'd have to wait outside the door while they voted on whether I could come in." Despite "some grumbling," the union leaders had enough faith in Kopple to let her record their part of the story, too.

Before she could film anything, though, Kopple first had to discover P-9 and realize the importance of its strike. She told me her film actually had its origins in Worthington, Minnesota, more than 100 miles from Austin, where she had gone to work on a picture about "how the industrial landscape had changed—the plant closings and wage concessions. People in Worthington tended to blame themselves. Their reaction was to ask, 'Why is this happening to me?' Then I saw Jim Guyette of P-9 on TV, talking about wage concessions. I felt good about what he was saying, because the people in Austin were fighting back. So I went to Austin and got there just as Ray Rogers was giving his pitch at a big rally. That's the first footage I shot."

It was the start of a longer shoot than Kopple could have envisioned. "We'd go back and forth from Austin," she says, "depending on what was happening and on how broke we were. All told, we spent three years there." After that came the editing and postproduction, a brilliant debut at the 1990 New York Film Festival—and then a long wait to get the picture into theaters.

"Harvey Weinstein of Miramax called me right after the New York Film Festival

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screenings," Kopple explains. But projects such as *American Dream* don't get made without money from many investors, both large and small—and one of them wanted his money back immediately, even before the film laboratory was paid for processing. According to Kopple, the threat of a suit made distribution impossible. *American Dream* went on to collect three prizes at the 1991 Sundance Film Festival, and in March 1991 won the Academy Award for best feature-length documentary—and still another year dragged by before its theatrical release.

Maybe the delay was fortunate. *American Dream* now hits the movie houses smack in the middle of our election-year follies, when it has the best chance of doing some good. "I try to make films for mass audiences," Kopple told me, noting that *Harlan County, U.S.A.*, her 1977 Oscar winner, made a respectable showing on *Variety*'s weekly list of top-grossing films. With any luck, *American Dream* ought to turn in a similar performance at the box office. It's moving; it's absorbing; it understands everything but is too wise to pardon all.

"Nobody wants us to make these movies." Barbara Kopple let those words slip as she thought over the trials of the past years. Her remark came back to me the next day, when I sat down over coffee with Elsa Rassbach, the writer-producer of *The Killing Floor.*

Filmed in 1983 and broadcast on PBS in 1984, *The Killing Floor* is only now getting its New York theatrical premiere, at Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater. It is a fiction film, which relies on extensive historical research into real people and events to tell the story of Frank Custer (Damien Leake), a black man caught between loyalty to his labor union and loyalty to his fellow blacks. Having come north to the "promised land" during World War I, he gets a job in the Chicago stockyards, at a moment when the federal government has forced management to tolerate the union. Custer makes friends with a white unionist (Clarence Felder) and becomes an organizer. But when the war ends and the troops no longer have to be fed, the government removes its protection. Management drives out the unionists (who are mostly white) and hires replacements (many of them blacks newly arrived from the South). The climax of these manipulations, and of the film, is the race riot of 1919. Suddenly, Custer finds that the white workers see him as a black, not as a union man; while the black workers now spurn him and follow Austin (Heavy) Williams (Moses Gunn), who has long argued that blacks cannot trust whites and shouldn't ally with them.

The conflict is so crucial to America you wonder why the film spent so long in the can.

The Killing Floor features lively, unforced performances from its large cast, with Leake giving an especially strong portrayal as Custer. He manages to be soft-spoken and self-confident, vulnerable and muscular all at the same time. The direction, by Bill Duke, is straightforward and efficient; the production design is a textbook example of low-budget thaumaturgy. Perhaps the screenplay, which Rassbach developed in collaboration with Ron Milner and Leslie Lee, is a little too purposeful; it strives to make one clear point per scene, with results that veer dangerously toward show-and-tell. But the conflict that the story dramatizes is so crucial to American life, the historical details are so precise and the tone of the production is so low-key and charming that you wonder why *The Killing Floor* has stayed in the can this long.

The answer, in brief: "Nobody wants us to make these movies."

Rassbach began work on *The Killing Floor* in 1975, when she was a producer at WGBH-TV in Boston. The film was to have been the eighth in a ten-part series of pictures for PBS called *Made in U.S.A.*, tracing American labor from the 1840s to the 1940s. With initial funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation, Rassbach developed the stories for all ten films. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting would have preferred to start at the beginning, Rassbach says, with the film about Lowell, Massachusetts, and the origins of American industrial labor. The N.E.H. instead chose *The Killing Floor* to be the series pilot. That wasn't a big problem; money was.

The N.E.H. required matching grants from the private sector. Dutifully, Rassbach began making the rounds of corporations, with predictable results. "This was in 1978, 1979, when the Business Roundtable had just been formed," she told me. "We went to Mobil Corporation, for example, one of the biggest funders of public television. They said the series was 'not one of our priorities.' " Meanwhile, Rassbach was pursuing more likely sources of money by going to labor unions. But PBS put strict limits on such funding. "They felt that unions were a special-interest group," Rassbach says, "unlike big corporations, which I guess represent everybody." With the cooperation of WGBH, Rassbach finally went to *The New York Times* with her story. In the wake of the ensuing controversy, PBS changed its rules in March 1980 to allow union financing of the series. Rassbach spent the next two years cobbling together the money from forty unions, as well as from foundations and a few corporations (such as Xerox and American Home Products) with close ties to labor.

So it took nine years to get the pilot made and broadcast on *American Playhouse*. Critical response was favorable; later, when Rassbach began taking the film to festivals, it won an award at Sundance, was shown in the International Critics Week section at Cannes and broke into theatrical release in London. Even so, the producers of *American Playhouse*, who were at that time inexperienced in film distribution, did not seek theatrical bookings in the United States. Worse still, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting declined to continue the series. Both *Made in U.S.A.* and *The Killing Floor* were in limbo.

"The corporations have vast power over what gets shown," Rassbach says. "Because of the funding system, labor is a suppressed subject. But the harder it's gotten, the more committed I've become." Prompted by union complaints about the demise of Rassbach's series, the City University of New York conducted a survey that found less than 0.5 percent of PBS programming hours was devoted to working people, with two-thirds of that spent on British rather than American labor. (The total included air time given to the servants on *Upstairs/Downstairs.*) All told, PBS was focusing on working people for twenty minutes a month. As Lawrence Cohn recently reported in *Variety*, the resulting debate led to 1991 Congressional hearings into PBS programming and to legislative efforts to make public broadcasting devote "a fair amount of funding to programming addressing the lives and concerns of the American worker."

Rassbach isn't holding her breath. She has put together the financing for her film on Lowell and intends to start shooting this fall, but for a theatrical release. The Corporation for Public Broadcast-

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ing is not involved. She also plans to go ahead with her third film, based on the Homestead lockout; and she is looking for further theatrical bookings of *The Killing Floor*.

The Killing Floor is screening daily at Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater through March 17. After the evening screening on March 16, filmgoers can hear Elsa Rassbach and screenwriter Leslie Lee talk about all these issues, as they join City University professor Judith Stein and labor leader Stanley Hill for a panel discussion about the image of working people in the mass media.

Short Takes: Abbe Wool, who worked with Alex Cox on *Repo Man* and *Sid and Nancy*, makes a pleasingly funky directorial debut in *Roadside Prophets*. Starring punk-rock icon John Doe as a sixties leftover and Adam Horovitz as a kid who thinks everything cool happened thirty years ago, *Roadside Prophets* is both a loving homage to road movies and a deadpan sendup of the genre.

Derek Jarman once again terrorizes the screen with *Edward II*, an adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's play, in which the homosexual theme, long reduced to a subtext, once more becomes super. The film is smart, ingenious, angry, aggressive and (on first viewing) reaches the borders of misogyny. See it for yourself and decide.

The fifth annual Women's Film and Video Festival will run from March 25 to April 11 at the WOW Cafe, 59 East 4th Street in New York. Of the selections I've seen, I particularly recommend *Once This Land Was Ours* by Shikha Jhingan; *The Disappearance of TiSoeur* by Harriet Hirshorn; *Behold the Promised Land* by Ardele Lister; and Su Friedrich's *First Comes Love*, which on repeated viewing looks more and more classical.

On March 31 at New York's splendiferous Ziegfeld Theater, you can see a special screening of Buster Keaton's 1928 *The Cameraman* with live accompaniment by Vince Giordano and his Nighthawks Orchestra. The screening is a benefit for Film Forum; tickets are available by mail order only. You can pick up an order form at the Film Forum box office or call (212) 627-2035 Monday through Friday from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. The price is $35 a ticket, or $25 for current Film Forum members, which seems reasonable enough to me. You'll have a great time and Film Forum really needs the help. Besides, what are you going to do with all that money—mail it to a presidential candidate? □

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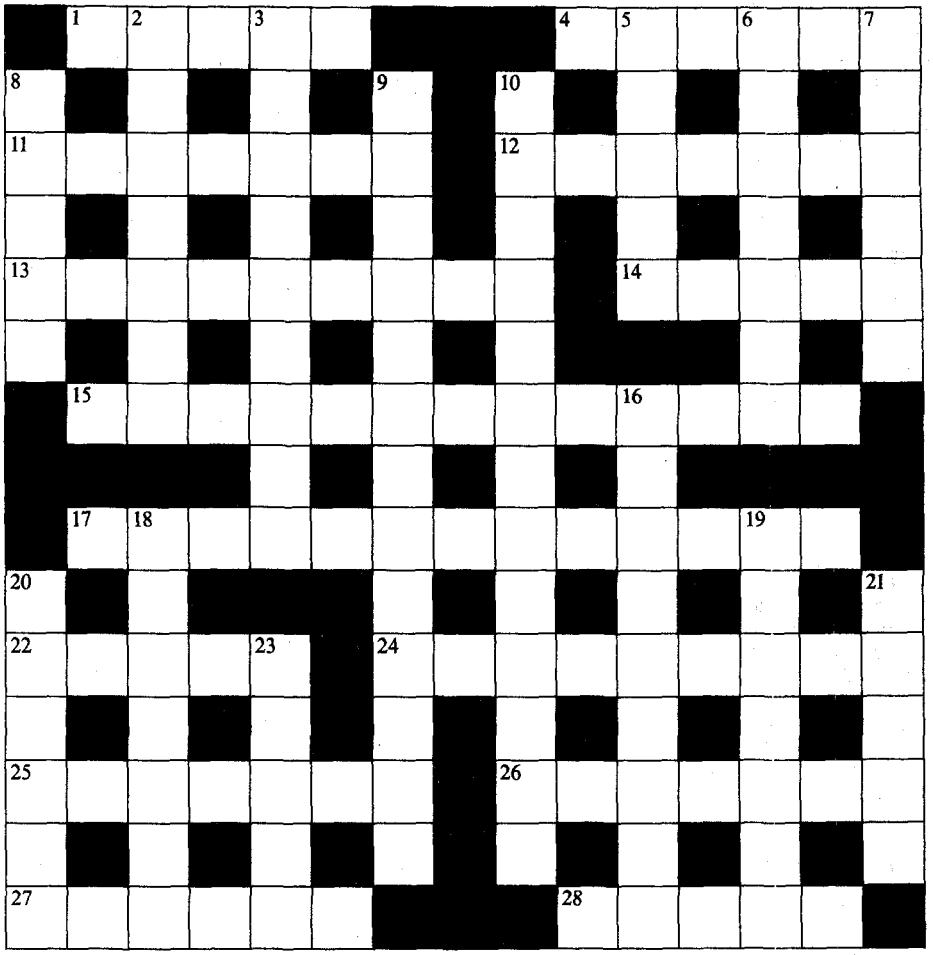

ACROSS

1 A point comes back up to me, being something rather frothy. (5)
4 See 22
11 A strange look in a spring month in Paris reminds one of a place unfairly associated with a bad skin problem. (7)
12 The first person getting seated wrong thinks this way. (7)
13 With a periodic lien, telephone the customers inside. (9)
14 Such a holding works both ways! (5)
15 Also, two bodies are unlikely to hold an exact space this way. (2,3,4,4)
17 Over in England, mother should get a flower shortly. (13)
22 and 4 Responsible for Brian's unusual behavior? (5,6)
24 Used by those who hope to find plenty of oil? (9)
25 Colors of musical moods, when this is doing poorly? (7)
26 and 23 down When certain people hope what you see is hit? (7,5)
27 A sign that wrongs are righted? (6)
28 Selected a hundred stockings, perhaps. (5)

DOWN

2 One who might tell you offhand a friend carries something of a cloud. (7)
3 Ted and you might be doing it though supposedly not on dark days. (6,3)
5 Very good at making a firm component, possibly. (5)
6 Mark this, possibly, on the first of March or does it mean just the opposite? (7)
7 Not the real stuff to stare sort of at the last letter. (6)
8 One may be rigged to get either a kiss or a slap. (5)
9 The captain had a lot of distance to rise with his sort. (5,8)
10 Could it be part home? (It might be stirring to put the ship of state on its feet.) (5,8)
16 Called the end of the score? It went the wrong way! (9)
18 You'll see her going round the wrong road but one saves too much to define it. (7)
19 Strange in Scotland, in Paris they make what a snake sometimes does. (7)
20 I'm in the middle of a mixed-up world! (6)
21 10 down is not considered good such in the You and Me decade. (5)
23 See 26 across

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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IN LIGHT OF THE *NATION*'S RECENT FORUM AND FREQUENT ATTACKS ON OLIVER STONE'S MOVIE, TIKKUN PRESENTS

JFK...

the assassination and the attempts to discredit the movie from the Left and from the Right

Speakers include:

Peter Dale Scott, whose research on the assassination has been at the center of the present controversy in the *Nation*;

Christopher Hitchens, columnist for the *Nation*, who critiques the movie and Scott;

John Newman, author of *JFK and Vietnam*, and a Major in the U.S. Army; and

Michael Lerner, editor of TIKKUN magazine.

New York, NY
Tuesday, March 24, 7:00 p.m.
New York Society for Ethical Culture
2 West 64th Street (at Central Park West)

Washington, DC
Wednesday, March 25, 7: 00 p.m.
Levi Center, Georgetown University
38th Street and Reservoir

$12/person

The *Nation*'s forum on *JFK* on March 3 was exciting, but it never came to grips with many of the fundamental issues. So in the week before the Academy Awards ce. emony, TIKKUN is sponsoring a discussion of the assassination and the unprecendented attack on Oliver Stone's film. We are interested in explaining why Left columnists at the *Nation* seem as threatened by the film as many rightists, why so many progressive people need to distance themselves from the issues raised by the film, and what the discrediting of the film means to America's contemporary elites. Our discussion will move beyond the specifics of the film and the assassination to an analysis of why the movements of the 1960s collapsed and how liberals and progressives continue to undermine themselves in the 1990s.

If you can't attend, subscribe to TIKKUN by sending $31 for one year (six issues) to 5100 Leona Street, Box N30, Oakland CA 94619-3002. You can read excerpts from some of the *JFK* talks in TIKKUN, plus Paul Buhle on *Maus*; Geraldine Ferraro and Barbara Boxer on strategies for liberals in 1992; Betty Mensch and Alan Freeman on bringing values back into schools; Danny Rubinstein, Jeremy Rifkin, Arthur Waskow, and much more.

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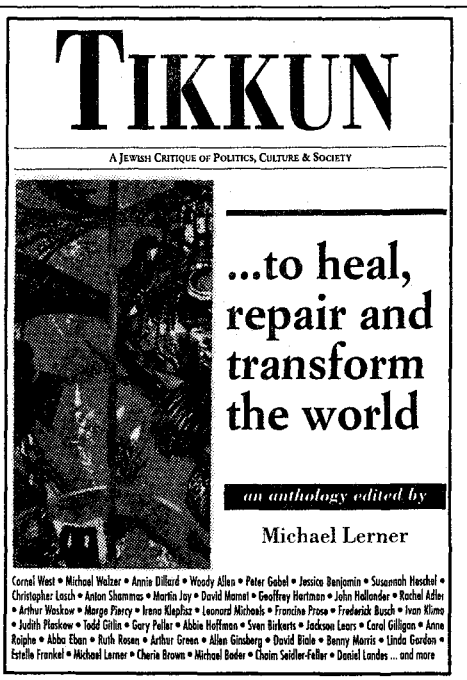
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